

THE  
SMALL HOLDINGS  
OF ENGLAND

A SURVEY OF VARIOUS EXISTING SYSTEMS

BY L. JEBB

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JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

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‘I see a great land poised as in a dream, waiting for the word by which it may live again.

. . . . .

‘I see a great land waiting for its own people to come and take possession of it.

. . . . .

‘Everything that the land has calls an answer in the breasts of the people, and quickly grows love for the use of those that live on it.

‘Without this love no people can exist; this is the creation, nourishment, and defence of nations. It is this that shall save England. . . .’

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## PREFACE

THE matter contained in this book is based on information which has been collected during the last three years for the Co-operative Small Holdings Association. This society realized the want of facts on which to base legislative or other reforms for a greater settlement on the land, and commissioned the author to visit the various districts in England where small holdings were already established, with a view to ascertaining the conditions under which they succeed. The survey, undertaken with this object, does not pretend to be in any way exhaustive, especially of those districts where small holdings of natural origin occur. There is still room for much research work in this connection, which would throw considerable light on many of the points which are open to argument. It is hoped, however, that the districts and undertakings described in the present volume will serve to illustrate the various types which are found all over England at the present time, and help to dispel the too common opinion that small holdings in this country are necessarily either failures on known lines or experiments on new ones.

My thanks are specially due to Mr. C. R. Buxton and Mr. W. A. Moore and the other members of the Co-operative Small Holdings Society, without whose help this work would never have been undertaken.

It would be impossible to mention by name all those from whom I have received assistance, but I would specially like to acknowledge my obligations to Mr. Raymond Webb of Evesham, Mr. J. W. Lawry of Calstock, and Mr. J. H. Diggle of Moulton, and to all those landowners and others whose work in connection with small holdings has been described in this book.

Finally, amongst those to whom I am indebted I especially recall the many small holders and working men in the districts I have visited, from whom I invariably received so much valuable information and so much courteous hospitality.

L. J.

ELLESMERE,  
*April, 1907.*

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

THE study of small holdings as they exist in different parts of the world to-day has practically been confined to other countries. Anyone turning his attention to the facts of this country is met at the outset with an absence of any information in a collected form which would enable him to realize what our actual position is in regard to this question. The few detached accounts which exist are, as a rule, of various isolated experiments, which have been made with a view to bringing people back to the land ; whereas the many localities where small holdings are a natural occurrence are practically ignored. This possibly accounts for the idea prevalent amongst a large class of people that, although in old days small holders formed a considerable part of our agricultural country, they have now almost completely died out, and that it is only under certain very special conditions they can exist at all. This is true to a limited degree ; at the same time there is still to be found in very

many parts of our rural districts to-day a survival of these ancient holdings. There have also sprung up to a small but appreciable extent holdings of a newer type.

The actual number of holdings of from 1 to 50 acres is given in the return of the Board of Agriculture for 1904 as 343,450 out of a total of 511,584. Although the area under cultivation in holdings of this size is only 15 per cent. of the whole, the actual number of such farms represents, therefore, two-thirds of the total number of holdings in England.

We have, then, what might be called a definite small-holding system established in our own country. To understand how to extend this system, the first necessity is to make a thorough investigation of what already exists. We are led to ask why, in some cases, ancient holdings have managed to persist, whereas in others they have been completely exterminated; and again, why, while this extermination was going on in certain places, in others new small holdings were arising from natural causes.

This suggests a state of varying circumstances in different parts of the country. We will not now consider the modifications induced by legislation, but confine ourselves in the first instance to a study of the varying natural conditions. One is at once struck by the fact that it is this very variety which seems to be the keynote of the whole question as regards England, comparing it with other countries.

If we go to the root of the matter, we find that this variety of agricultural conditions arises primarily as an outcome of the sequence of geological events, which have exposed on the comparatively small surface of England a very much larger number of geological formations than is found anywhere else on the same area. The influence of this on our agriculture is very far-reaching. Its direct effect is experienced in the actual fertility or sterility of the soils arising from the different strata, their water-bearing powers, and the physical properties forming the classes of soil known as light or heavy, warm or cold. Apart from this, the elevations of the harder rocks in the form of mountain barriers, or, on a lesser scale, the existence of mere ridges, influence the climatic conditions, making one area early, whilst that a few miles distant may be late; in some cases this may be due to altitude, in others to aspect, immunity from frost, rainfall, or mere shelter from prevalent winds.

Scientific manuring and methods of cultivation can go a long way towards altering the inherent qualities of the less fertile soils, so as to make them yield the same produce per acre as the richer; but such factors as the lateness of a cold soil or exposure to unsuitable climatic conditions can only be altered by intelligent effort where sufficient capital is available to supplant them by artificial means. In a country where the small man's only capital is his own labour, he is very dependent on the natural conditions which enable him to get

a sure and quick return for that labour ; and when these conditions are subject to so much local variation, no hard and fast rule can be laid down as to the methods which he can pursue with advantage.

Besides the direct effects just mentioned, the geological structure of England introduces further complications into the purely agricultural problem. Its vast coalfields, giving rise to so many industrial centres, not to speak of the lesser mining industries, which have made England into as much a manufacturing nation as an agricultural one, have indirectly much influence on the small-holding question. On the one hand they disturb rates of wages by offering a competition in employment which gives the English working man an alternative to a low agricultural wage in districts where, perhaps, the return of the soil only admits of a low wage.

On the other hand, our large manufacturing towns afford huge local markets, where the possibility of a retail price in garden or agricultural produce enables that produce to be grown profitably under unsuitable conditions of soil or climate. Not the least important influence of an industrial side to national life is its connection with small holdings where these are used merely as adjuncts to other forms of employment. Much land which, from its nature and surroundings, could not yield an entire living on a small scale, when utilized in this way gets the benefit of the capital derived from this other source, while at the same time it is

the means of using this other form of employment to better advantage.

As already stated, the variety of conditions, of which some idea will have been given above, is the keynote of the small-holding question in this country. This differs very much from the broad classifications into which the conditions in other countries can be arranged, and which affect not so much the type of small holding itself as the prevalence of large holdings as opposed to small ones.

For instance, if we take France, we are told that it is 'a country of infinite variety,' and that the natural conformation of certain parts of the country renders the system of small holdings inevitable. 'In Normandy, Le Nivernais, in the plains of Beauce and Berry, districts of vast pasture and corn-fields, involving a large capital outlay on stock or up-to-date, costly machinery, large properties must always prevail ; but in Burgundy, in the countries of narrow valleys divided by low hills, of small fields, of vineyards perched on rocky hillsides, of market-gardens, peasant proprietors will always flourish and tend to increase.'\*

In Ireland the agricultural conditions are even more uniform. The great basin of carboniferous limestone, which forms practically the whole centre of the country, affords a huge grazing and pasture district, where the holdings are all much of the

\* Reginald Lister, Memorandum supplied to Small Holdings Committee, 1906.

same type. Moreover, its manufacturing towns and industries are too few to cause any disturbing elements. The same thing applies to Denmark, which is practically an agricultural country, the majority of the population having to depend upon the soil. But in England the different geological formations are so interlaced and overlapping that, as has been shown, what is possible in the way of cultivation in one district may be quite the reverse a few miles away. This difference in cultivation affects to such a degree questions as to the size of the holding, the amount of horse labour required, the economic rent, and the disposal of produce, that it will be seen how the conditions of success must vary with each locality; hence the importance of allowing for this variation in any scheme for a universal extension of the small-holding system.

It is very instructive from this point of view to notice the errors into which men fall when their knowledge, however intimate, is confined to one district only. In the recent Report of the Small Holdings Committee appointed by the Board of Agriculture examples of this constantly recur amongst witnesses whose work is confined to special districts, whereas those who have had to do with the administration of lands in widely different areas take broader and less emphatic views on the general possibilities of small holdings.

One witness, a large land agent, went so far as to say that there was no small-holding system in England at all, but that, unfortunately, solitary

small holdings only occurred in a few specially favoured districts.

It seems, therefore, very important, in considering this question, to have a comprehensive view of all the different types of small holdings which are being a success in England at the present time ; to know exactly what have been the results of the different experiments undertaken to establish them ; and to realize what are the lessons we have to learn from existing facts.

This book has been compiled with the view of supplying this want, and of furnishing, at any rate, a basis for further study. The author's idea is simply to present the facts as they exist at the present time, and, without entering into any controversial points, call special attention to those results which seem to throw any light on disputed questions.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NATURAL OCCURRENCE OF SMALL HOLDINGS

To trace the causes which have led to the disappearance of the small holdings which at one time existed all over England would entail a review of our land system from the earliest times. If a revival of such holdings to-day necessitated a return to the conditions under which they formerly flourished, it would demand a detailed study of those causes. But, under our altered conditions of trade and agriculture, such a study is now merely of historical interest, and a knowledge of it would hardly help us in the reconstruction of the small-holding system. Anyone wishing to get a general idea of the sequence of events which led up to our present conditions could not do better than read Mr. Jesse Collings's recent book on Land Reform. In three chapters which he devotes to the land system he shows how the people have been divorced from the soil, not so much from economic causes as from arbitrary class legislation. The chief form which this took was in the enclosure of common lands. Over 7,500,000 acres were enclosed



from 1760 to 1867, or one-third of the total area under cultivation in the latter year.

There is no doubt that this gave a great impetus to improved methods of agriculture, and brought into far more profitable use, by intensive farming, the larger part of the newly enclosed areas. But while acknowledging these benefits, it must be remembered that they were derived largely at the expense of the small man, who had hitherto gained most of his living from the rights he possessed of turning out stock of all kinds on the commons, and of obtaining free fuel and litter. When these rights were removed, the little arable holding which he had cultivated for the provision of winter fodder was rendered useless as a complete source of livelihood. The practical outcome of this was to turn the small independent man into a wage-earner at 8s. a week.

At the time of the earlier Enclosure Acts no account was taken of the injustice done to these men, in spite of the protests raised by the more far-seeing contemporaries ; in the General Enclosure Act of 1845, however, which was only passed after meeting with much opposition, safeguards were said to be provided for protecting the rights of peasants and others who had claims on the soil. As a matter of practice this amounted to very little, for we see that out of the 614,804 acres enclosed between 1845 and 1869, only 2,223 acres were allotted to the labouring poor. Moreover, as pointed out in the Report of the Committee on

Small Holdings in 1890, the compensation received in the form of a small freehold could be parted with, and might pass out of the small-holding class ; whereas 'the continuous existence of common rights was a continuous stimulus to the creation and maintenance of small holdings in the neighbourhood.'

It has been shown how the original small holder was put into the position of a wage-earner ; for the future, therefore, he was at the mercy of those various economic causes which were to affect the rate of agricultural wages.

The great boom in agriculture due to the high prices received for produce during the continental and American wars just preceded the industrial rise. There being no competition in any other form of work, the large number of agricultural men who had been thrown on the labour market, as described above, kept down the rate of wages to such a degree that they in no way shared in the prosperity of the classes above them. Labour being cheap, tillage was doubly profitable to the larger farmer, and acres upon acres of old pasture land were brought under the plough. Then came the gradual growth of our manufacturing towns, and with it the demand for labour, drawing men away from the country districts. Collaterally with this movement the small village tradesman and artisan found their work superseded by town manufactures. The village shoemaker and tailor, the wheelwright and the smith, became less and less able to hold

their own, and their departure has contributed appreciably to the rural depopulation.

The reaction in arable farming was thus gradually brought about. The introduction of labour-saving machinery in agriculture enabled the farmer to dismiss hands for which he now would have to pay a higher wage. In many places this labour question has gone a step further, and when the fall in prices came, and agricultural depression set in, the farmer had no alternative but to lay down large tracts to grass, and thus make himself even less dependent on the man who is now in a position to refuse less than a comparatively high living wage.

During all this time such opportunities as still existed for the small man to get hold of a piece of land were eagerly sought after. Unfortunately, the rage for farming on a large scale, encouraged by the curiously plausible economic arguments about production on these methods, led to the wholesale destruction of the smaller holdings on large estates by their absorption into huge farms. Even now, when the tide is turning towards less extensive and more intensive cultivation, want of capital for the renewal or repair of the small holdings is leading to the same result.

There were at the same time various other causes tending either to the destruction of small holdings, or their removal as such from the reach of the *bona fide* cultivator. Once in the market through death or for any other reason, they are at the mercy of the capitalist, whether as a landowner for the pur-

poses of enlarging his estate, or as a retired tradesman, or as a building speculator. Since the fall in the value of land the larger landowner has practically ceased to be a competitor, but there has arisen an increasing demand for small plots of land in many districts amongst town men and retired tradespeople for residential purposes, putting a value on the land which is not economic from the small cultivator's point of view.

There have been, therefore, and still are, causes at work which tend to the steady decrease of such holdings as already exist. And this is not due to the absence of desire for them amongst small cultivators, or to their failure in an economic sense. While, on the one hand, this movement is going on there are reasons which prevent any compensating movement in the opposite direction taking place to any appreciable degree. It might be argued that if small holdings were economically sound, we would expect them to arise in a natural manner, according to the laws of supply and demand ; that is to say, that if cultivation on a small scale was sufficiently remunerative to the small holder himself, he could offer a price for his holding, whether in the form of purchase or rent, which would cause land to come into the market in small lots, or would make the provision of small occupations a profitable investment for landowners.

It has been shown how conditions other than agricultural, affecting the demand for land, work against this in many districts. There must, how-

ever, be vast tracts in places unsuitable for residential purposes where no such competition is taking place. We are led to ask, why, therefore, do not small holdings occur in a natural manner in such places, granted that the land is otherwise suitable for small-holding cultivation?

This leads us first to the consideration of some points in connection with the initial creation of small holdings. It has cost nothing to destroy those holdings which already existed, but it costs a good deal to supply any which are to take their place. In old days the enterprising small man without capital could, by his own labour, gradually build himself up a small holding by squatting on common land and getting patches under cultivation; in later times he could arrive at the same result by taking enclosed but uncultivated land on a long lease at a nominal rent, on which he put up his own house.\* In this way he was at the same time creating his own holding and getting a living. These conditions are now practically destroyed, although an analogy can be found to them in the newly developed fruit-growing districts, where the men have acquired the land in the first instance at an agricultural price, and created their own capital by raising its value to market-gardening price as a result of their own labour.† But for the most part a creation of holdings means an initial outlay, which

\* See Reports on Mr. Harris's holdings at Halwill, and Mr. Fryers at Verwood.

† See Reports on Calstock, Tiptree, and Cambridgeshire.

renders it prohibitive not only to the small man, but to the landowner for the purposes of investment.

This applies more especially to small farm holdings which necessitate the cost of buildings and fencing. We do find, however, that where the conditions are suitable for market-gardening and fruit-growing, not involving so great an outlay, new small holdings have cropped up naturally in those places where it has been possible to acquire land in an ordinary commercial way ; that is to say, in localities where the whole neighbourhood was not in the hands of very large landowners, or where the country, being ill adapted for sport or residential estates, came into the market on its purely agricultural value, and in lots not beyond the reach of smaller men.

How much more this would happen if most of the land of England was not tied up either directly or indirectly by our customs of entail and primogeniture is a matter of argument. It is certain that an absence of these restrictions would be the means of bringing land in more convenient lots into the market ; but definite legislation would have to accompany it to prevent such conditions merely facilitating the purchase of land by capitalists for the sake of those amenities which accompany its possession.

So far we have very briefly considered the main causes which have made small holdings die out on the one hand, and prevented their natural creation

on the other. Attention is called to the fact that these causes have nothing to do *directly* with the purely agricultural reasons which make small holdings an economic success or the reverse.

It was pointed out in the preceding chapter that there still exists in England a definite small-holding system, consisting of holdings which are a survival of ancient times, and of new ones which have cropped up more recently. That this should be the case, in spite of the general trend of events tending to their destruction, leads us to regard both these types with peculiar interest, and to ask what are the special conditions which are favourable to their existence.

Now, if a man gets a living on a small area it necessarily implies that the return from the land itself must be relatively very great, or the produce grown must be of such a quality or of such a type as commands a relatively high price. Failing this, if the small area in itself cannot produce a sufficient return for a living, it must be so situated that the insufficiency of the land is supplemented by some money-producing factor.

Amongst these supplements are the common rights we have mentioned as being the support of so many small holders in former times. In the few places where such rights have persisted we find that this has been the reason of small holdings persisting also, such as in the neighbourhood of the New Forest and round what was originally Malvern Chase. The extinction of the bulk of

such holdings has been brought about by the direct intervention of legislation. But there are two fundamental conditions inherent in the nature of a place, unchangeable by the laws or doings of man, which determine a relatively large return on a small area; these are climate and soil. When we come to study the conditions which have caused ancient holdings to survive, we invariably find that when their first successful initiation was due to fertility of soil or suitability of climate, these small holdings have persisted and still flourish in spite of all other untoward circumstances. As instances of this type I would mention the Channel Islands, the Isle of Axholme in the north-west corner of Lincolnshire, and the fen districts of the same county. Here not only is the natural fertility of the soil very great, but the land is specially suitable for growing such crops as early potatoes and celery, for which larger cash returns are obtained than for ordinary farm produce. It is these same conditions of suitable climate or soil which have caused newer holdings to arise in those localities where it has been possible to acquire land on ordinary commercial lines. An instance of this is the district of Calstock, where the soil is poor and markets are very distant; but the climate is propitious for early ripening.

But we find small holdings, old and new, existing also in districts where these qualifications of soil and climate are absent, and where there are no common rights; there are then other factors con



ducive to success. They must necessarily be of a kind which supplement or counterbalance the limitations of an area which is not capable of yielding a sufficient return for the labour put into it to supply a man with an entire living. First, the holdings may be situated near some market, causing such a demand for the type of produce grown that the relatively high price obtained in consequence may adequately pay for the greater expense involved in growing it under unfavourable conditions. As an example we may take that type of holding near a large town where vegetables are produced. The soil may be poor, the climate unpropitious, but the mere fact of being in the proximity of a good retail market may make it worth a man's while to go in for intensive cultivation, and put in a lot of hand labour. In this case it is the market which is the predominating factor insuring success.

Another factor which, by supplementing the limits of a small area, insures success is the presence of conditions affording other labour as an adjunct—as, for instance, the proximity of mines and local industries, or surrounding agricultural conditions affording much piece-work—not only hoeing and harvesting, but draining, dyking, quarrying, etc. That is to say, soil may be poor, climate may be bad, markets may be distant, but small holdings flourish, and are a great benefit to their occupiers, if there is any possibility of earning a wage outside.

## 18 EPWORTH, ISLE OF AXHOLME

The following reports on holdings which are of natural occurrence are divided into two classes. First, those which exist as a survival of ancient times in the Isle of Axholme, in the neighbourhood of Boston, in Wensleydale, and near Bewdley in Shropshire. Secondly, those which have developed as a natural growth in more recent times—viz., those devoted to fruit-growing at Calstock in Cornwall and at Wisbech in Cambridgeshire; to market-gardening at Upwey in Dorset and Sandy in Bedfordshire; and to seed-growing at Tiptree in Essex. An account is also given of the market-garden and fruit-holdings at Evesham, which form a sort of link between the two classes, the substratum of ancient holdings here having very largely developed in recent times.

### I.—SMALL HOLDINGS WHICH ARE A SURVIVAL OF ANCIENT TIMES.

#### EPWORTH, ISLE OF AXHOLME.

The conditions in the Isle of Axholme approximate nearer to those of peasant proprietors on the Continent than in any other part of England. There are large tracts of land divided up into unfenced strips, locally known as selions, of from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 2 acres each. The small holders live in the villages, each cultivating one or more of the selions. Many of them hold up to 20 acres in widely separated strips. Most of them are freeholders,

and those that rent their strips do so off small proprietors.

For the parish of Epworth I was given the following list of holdings, compiled from the rate-book some years ago, and still approximately correct :

Under 2 acres ...	...	...	80 holders.
10 acres and under	20	...	115 „
20 „	50	...	31 „
50 „	100	...	14 „
100 „	200	...	12 „
Over 200 acres ...	...	...	2 „

*I.e.*, out of 254 holders, 89 per cent. hold under 50 acres ; out of 5,741 acres, 3,400 are said to be held by small farmers.

An old resident in the parish informed me that nearly every farmer holding larger areas in the district had started life as a labourer.

#### CULTIVATION.

The mainstay of the small holders here is evidently potato cultivation.\* On some of the most suitable land potatoes are grown every year ; on many plots potatoes and wheat are grown alternately ; the usual course, however, is potatoes, wheat, oats, roots ; or potatoes, wheat, oats (or barley), seeds, turnips.

On the larger farms celery is extensively grown between potatoes, but I did not find that small holders went in for it, or for any special market-garden crop to any extent. Some carrots, cabbage,

## 20 EPWORTH, ISLE OF AXHOLME

and beet were grown in individual cases. The potato crops average 6 tons to the acre, and go up to 11 tons in a good season.

A local dealer told me that nearly 2,000 tons of potatoes passed through his hands yearly from the Epworth district.

The holders all live in Epworth, the outskirts of which are very straggling; many of the detached houses in the street have farm buildings, with open yards adjacent to them. Everyone keeps pigs for manure; the larger holders fatten one or two bullocks for sale at the annual May fair, or keep a few cows, rearing the calves to fatten at eighteen months.

Artificial manure is largely used; since the light railway from Haxey Junction has been opened there has been an enormous amount of town manure sent from Hull and Sheffield at a cost of 6s. a ton (including carriage at 2s. 6d.). Here, as in other districts on good land, I was assured that it paid small holders to grow ordinary farm crops and sell corn. I doubt, however, that this would be the case if it were not for the potatoes; moreover, the necessity of growing enough straw to make manure seemed to weigh in their minds more than the monetary value of the grain. The want of knowledge in the preservation of farmyard manure was very apparent, both from the waste of straw and the pools of wet and mud in which the manure lay about in the yards.

SIZE OF HOLDINGS.

Ten acres was given as the smallest area on which a man could bring up a family.

The following figures were given me by a small holder of long experience as a rough estimate of possible profits on 10 acres :

<i>Income.</i>		<i>Expenditure.</i>	
	£		£
Two acres potatoes ...	35	Rent and taxes ...	22
Two acres wheat ...	16	Horse work ...	8
Two acres barley ...	15	Manure... ...	18
One acre mangolds ...	10	Profit ... ..	64
Two acres carrots ...	30		
One acre clover or grass	6		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	£112		£112

The size of the holding appeared to be a matter of importance. Suitable sizes seemed to fall naturally into three classes.

1. For a labourer in regular employment 2 acres was a sufficient acreage. On this he could grow wheat, barley and potatoes sufficient to fatten pigs for home consumption, and for supplying manure. More land would be a disadvantage to him. Rent and hire for horse labour would cost him about £8.

2. For a man who had saved a little money at farm service, 5 to 10 acres, which would enable him to keep a horse and do job work for others.

3. For an entire living, from 10 to 20 acres ; but it would be unwise for a man who was single-handed—*i.e.*, with a family too young to work—to have more

## 22 EPWORTH. ISLE OF AXHOLME

than 10 acres. That was the outside limit a man could manage without employing extra labour, and a larger area would probably handicap him.

### CHARACTER OF HOLDERS.

One of the striking features of this district is that the holdings are not used so much to supplement other occupations as one finds in other places. The greater number of the men holding 10 to 20 acres are actually living on the proceeds of their holdings; below that acreage they either do job work or have some regular occupation, but the aim of all appears to be to acquire in time sufficient land to support themselves altogether.

### SOIL.

There is no doubt that the fertility of the soil accounts largely for the prosperity of the small cultivators—its *suitability* for potatoes and the fact that it is easily worked.

For a mile or two on either side the Trent the land has been ‘warped’—*i.e.*, it has been flooded repeatedly by the tidal water of the river until several feet of a silty deposit have been accumulated, and this forms eminently suitable potato soil. Apart from this there are stretches of good loams, sometimes of a sandy, sometimes of a peaty nature, which, when on a sandy subsoil, work well all the year round and bring good crops.

## MARKETS.

The potatoes are nearly all bought up by commission agents for Manchester and the large towns of the West Riding of Yorkshire. A great many are sold on commission in Doncaster Market. Doncaster is the best fair for the neighbourhood, sixteen miles distant. The small holders, as a rule, get their fat stock ready for the two Epworth fairs in the spring and autumn. Several of the larger holders complained of the rings of agents both for sale and purchase, and lamented the fact that there was no strong enough local leader to organize co-operative methods against them.

## PRICE OF LAND.

The better land was now selling at an average price of £60 to £70 an acre ; up to £100 might be given occasionally for small lots of the best in a convenient situation.

A large farmer in the parish had recently bought 80 acres of poor land at £10. He said it only wanted proper cultivation to make it profitable.

## RENT.

The average rent was : For small plots of  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 acre of good land, up to £4 ; for small plots up to 5 acres, £2 to £3 ; for larger plots or those inconveniently situated on poorer land, up to £2 an acre.

The large farms in the district were often not more than 15s. to £1 an acre.

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There appear to be constantly small plots of land in the market either for sale or for hire, changes being solely due to deaths or to a man leaving to go on a larger holding.

As a rule the tenancies are yearly, with six months' notice to quit. A holding of 10 to 20 acres is often held under several different small proprietors.

### WAGES OF THE DISTRICT.

The average wage (exclusive of rent) for a man in regular employment is 15s. a week for nine months; 5s. a day for the first fortnight of harvest; 4s. a day for the second fortnight of harvest. The total average with piece-work is put at 18s. a week. Up to 6s. a day can be earned potato-lifting at 18s. an acre.

### OWNERSHIP VERSUS TENANCY.

In this district the preference for ownership as opposed to tenancy is unqualified. But, where-as it is the one thing to be aimed at finally, there is a universal opinion that it is necessary for a man to *begin by renting*, and save to buy. As there are always equal facilities for any man in course of time either to rent or buy small plots of land, things adjust themselves in a natural manner on this point.

### INCREASED PROSPERITY.

Many of the freeholders admit they are mortgaged and paying as much interest as the rent



would amount to ; but they appear to be doing well, and old residents dilate on the increased prosperity of the place.

‘ See for yourself ; do we look depressed ? ’ was the indignant rejoinder of a substantial-looking small holder when I intimated that suggestions had been made in that direction. He showed me the sleeve of his coat and said : ‘ When I was a lad such cloth was only worn on Sundays, and the only beef eaten in Epworth was at the annual fair.’

#### FINANCIAL POSITION.

It must not be ignored, however, that there was a small percentage of people who went under from having bought land at too high prices in the prosperous times on borrowed money. In many instances the passion for acquiring more land prevented them from recovering themselves when it would have been otherwise possible with hard work and thrift. That this is recognized by the small holders of the present time is apparent from the unanimous assertion that ‘ it is a dangerous thing for a man to have a larger holding than he can manage.’

That the bulk of the freeholders are now in the state of financial insolvency which has been attributed to them is emphatically denied by men of long-standing local knowledge, though they admit that there will always be some failures. This statement appeared to be borne out by the general air of prosperity among the holders themselves, the

tidy and well-farmed appearance of the plots, and the amount of artificial and town manure passing through the hands of local agents.

In summarizing the facts which appear to have led to the satisfactory state of affairs at Epworth, the *suitability of the land* stands out as a main factor. But though suitable land is to be found in other localities, the conditions of the Isle of Axholme as regards small holdings are practically unique.

In considering it as an object-lesson for the extension of small holdings in other places, I would lay stress on what I regard as the main factor—viz., *the facilities which exist for small men to acquire land*. The conditions relating to this point seem to be of the greatest moment.

*First*, the knowledge that there is a chance for anyone to acquire land in reasonable time. This produces a preliminary incentive to save to the agricultural labourer without capital.

*Secondly*, the possibility that there is for *renting* small plots by way of a start before any capital is saved. This gives a man preliminary experience how best to work his land and lay out his money on it to the best advantage.

*Thirdly*, the possibility both of finally purchasing his own holding, or of adding to it until he reaches the position of a large tenant farmer.

Here we seem to have the ideal condition for placing the best men in occupation—viz., the possibility of acquiring land for those who have risen by

## BOSTON DISTRICT: CULTIVATION 27

their own capacity and industry. This natural selection avoids one of the dangers in getting unsuitable tenants, which is experienced where small holdings have been created artificially. Other difficulties also find natural solutions in an elastic system of local custom, which has been evolved according to local requirements—*e.g.*, the custom of the district as regards tenant right seems to be considered satisfactory and just to both parties concerned. The cost of land transfer, though still very much too high, is lower than in many places. The natural law of supply and demand regulates the size of holdings best suited to local conditions.

While there is still much room for improvement in methods of co-operation, cheapening of land transfers, etc., the whole place may well be looked upon as an object-lesson of what can be achieved without legislative interference beyond that of placing suitable land, where there is a demand for it, within the reach of the people who are anxious to acquire it.

### SMALL HOLDINGS IN THE BOSTON DISTRICT.

Lincolnshire forms a striking example of the fact that, where natural conditions are favourable, small holdings occur and persist without artificial help.

On the clay and heath lands of central and north Lincolnshire few small holdings are to be found; the farms are large, sheep and cattle are reared,

and the system of ordinary four-course farming is pursued.

On the other hand, in the fen districts and marsh lands between Boston and the east coast of Lincolnshire there is a very large proportion of small holdings. The land here is naturally very productive, and grows heavy crops of wheat, beans, turnips, mustard, and potatoes. A strip of light, silty land, known as the toft land, runs between the marsh and the fen from Boston to Wainfleet by Friskney and Kirton. It is specially suitable for early potatoes, and many people on it are making a living out of 5 or 6 acres.

The average size of the smaller holdings on the fen land is from 10 to 30 acres.

#### CULTIVATION.

Celery and early potatoes are the mainstay of the small holder in this district. Every cottage garden has its celery frame. It is not unusual to get three crops off the best land—viz., cabbage, which is planted out in early autumn and got off in spring in time to put in potatoes and celery, the latter being planted between the potatoes in every third row. The average crop of potatoes is 5 to 8 tons per acre for earlies, and 8 to 10 for second earlies. In a good year £25 to £30 is easily made per acre. I heard of one case where a man got £22 10s. off half an acre. At the end of June £11 a ton has been given; by the end of July it will drop to £4. The potatoes from this district come on the

London market after the Jerseys. Several holders gave me the expenses of the crop as follows :

				£
Fish manure	...	...	...	3
Guano	...	...	...	2
Seed	...	...	...	3
				—
Total per acre	...	...	...	£8

If they included the cost of their own labour, the total expense amounted to £11 or £12.

The cabbage crop had been sold standing this year (1905) at an average price of £16 an acre.

The smaller men as a rule sell them to commission agents, and cart them to the station twice a day.

The carriage to London was 12s. 6d. a ton, and to Sheffield 8s. 6d. Forty baskets went to a ton, and the price received would be from 1s. to 3s. a basket. The returned empties cost 10s. for 100 baskets.

I was told of several cases where, in a good season, as much as £100 an acre had been received for the three crops, but this was admitted to be exceptional.

It seemed to be a usual practice to grow wheat after potatoes, merely harrowing the land before sowing, so that one ploughing did for two years.

All the men kept a few head of stock to make manure and consume the roots. The buildings of those I saw were attached to the cottages in and about the straggling villages. Every man had a strongly built little horse with which he worked

his land with light implements, and carted his produce into Boston to be sent off by rail. The crops on the holding would always include sufficient corn for his winter keep, and where there was no grass, green fodder for the summer.

The small holders use an enormous amount of artificial manure, the crops being exhaustive and nearly all sold off. Fish refuse from Grimsby is very largely used, and put on at the rate of 3 tons to the acre. The price is 12s. 6d. a ton, and the carriage amounts to 4s. 6d. Some holders gave me £1 a ton as the cost of putting it on the land.

A responsive, easily-worked soil, much manure, big crops, and quick returns seems to be the secret of success in this district.

#### MARKETS.

There is no good market at Boston. All the produce is bought up by commission agents for the London, Sheffield, and Manchester markets. Carting to Boston station seems to be a serious item. In many cases the small holders are at a distance of seven and eight miles, and complained of the great waste of time when they had to be 'on the road' all day.

#### PRICE OF LAND, ETC.

There is at the present time great competition for all land to be let, but I was informed that it is difficult to sell land. Some of the best toft land in small plots still fetches up to £100 an acre, but

good land in the district has been sold for from £40 to £75.

About 1868-74, when farming was prosperous and the price of land was very high, as much as £150 an acre had been given. Being an ugly county, with no sport, non-resident landlords had sold out, and the competition for farms amongst the tenants had been very high, for they either had to remain farmers or become labourers, and the only way to acquire land was by buying it. In nearly every case two-thirds of the purchase-money was borrowed on mortgage. Then followed the series of bad seasons, with the fall in the price of corn and wool. A Boston solicitor told me that in every single case with which his firm dealt the man went bankrupt. When the mortgagees sold the present owners acquired the land at proper prices, and are doing well. They turn their attention more to special crops, such as potatoes and celery, and work hard themselves. By adding to their holdings by degrees they can work their way up, in contrast to those who made big purchases on borrowed money and could not tide over bad times. The freeholders are all mortgaged, but not up to the hilt, and are paying as much in interest as their neighbours do in rent. Many of the tenants on the toft land are paying £5 to £6 an acre rent. From £2 to £3 seems to be the average for the smaller holdings on the fen land.

## WAGES.

The average wage of the district is 2s. a day in winter and 2s. 6d. in summer. Harvest wages are extra, and there is much piece-work. Five shillings a day can be earned potato-lifting, and a family can get up to 12s. 6d. a day where the children are old enough to work. The school holidays are arranged with a view to the children being free at harvesting times.

In the parish of Friskney, a purely agricultural village, with a population of 1,300, out of 145 ratepayers solely engaged in agriculture, 70—*i.e.*, 50 per cent.—are men who started as agricultural labourers, and now own or rent small holdings. The two largest farmers in the parish, one of them now farming over 2,000 acres, began at 4d. a day, and have worked their own way up.

There are 68 acres of allotments in the parish, let at from 30s. to £2 14s., which are nearly all held by labourers, in spite of the land being a mile out of the village. Preference is given to the agricultural labourers before tradespeople, and young unmarried men living at home are specially induced to take them up. Fifty-four acres of the allotments are let by the trustees of land left for the benefit of the poor in the parish, and out of the rents received the trustees have built double cottages, which they are able to let with an acre of land apiece at £6. The only people receiving parish relief are a few widows, and there are practically no drunkards in the place.



There is a cow and pig club in the village, and a co-operative credit bank has been established some years.

Amongst the holders interviewed, one man rented and owned 20 acres. He kept two men and a boy in constant employment on the land, having another occupation himself. From 2 acres last year he had received £89 for celery and potatoes. He had on the place two dairy cows, two heifers, three yearlings, and two calves, besides pigs and 150 head of poultry. He had a few acres of grass land, and grew all the produce for the animals' consumption, but occasionally bought hay. He believed that a man could live very comfortably without other employment on 15 acres. He accounted for the rural exodus by saying that in former days the men only stayed because it never occurred to them that there was anything to do but farm ; and that there was nothing inherent in farming in that district which made it more profitable in old days, but that it could be made to pay as well now as formerly if people chose to work. A large farmer and old resident in the district, who had worked his own way up, corroborated the statements as to the financial position of freeholders now as compared with twenty years ago. The small holders were all getting on well, and he knew many cases of men in good positions who had started as labourers. But he said there were many men now who preferred a good foreman's place to farming on their own account, having suffered themselves in the bad times.

## OWNERSHIP VERSUS TENANCY.

In a general consideration of this district in connection with the whole small-holding question, the following facts relating to the question of ownership and tenancy are very prominent :

1. That the demand for small holdings to *rent* is very much greater than the supply.

2. That there appears to be little demand for small holdings to purchase.

3. That the experience of those men who have risen from agricultural labourers to large farmers is that a man without capital must begin by renting a piece of land of such a size that he can manage while still in regular employment ; and that when he has saved more capital he must rent a large enough piece to maintain himself, and add to it by degrees.

They attribute financial failures to the purchasing of land on borrowed capital, without sufficient means to tide over bad seasons ; and they maintain that the secret of success is never to get beyond what they have sufficient capital to work profitably.

4. The freeholders appear, as far as it is possible to obtain reliable information, to be paying as much in interest on mortgage as the rent of adjoining land per acre.

Facilities for obtaining working capital and for purchase on the instalment system would no doubt modify some of the present difficulties relating to ownership. On the other hand, ownership appears

necessarily to limit the possibilities of a small holder rising to the position of a larger farmer, in that it is not so possible for him to move on to a larger holding without loss when his amount of capital would otherwise justify a larger venture.

#### FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL HOLDINGS.

The fact that there is a continual demand for small holdings to rent, and that there appears to be at the same time some difficulty in selling land, suggests the advisability of the acquisition of land in these districts by public bodies or private enterprise for the purpose of subdivision and reletting.

In a district where the natural conditions are so favourable to small holdings, and where the local people, with a knowledge of the suitable cultivation, are clamouring for land, it would seem desirable to establish greater facilities for its acquisition to those who by their own efforts will undoubtedly succeed on it.

#### SMALL HOLDINGS IN THE WEST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE.

##### GENERAL METHODS OF FARMING.

In the northern moor and dale district of the West Riding the typical farm is about 40 to 60 acres, exclusive of a moor run for sheep.

The dalesman can work this amount of land with the help of his family, and seldom employs other labour save in harvest-time. Grown-up sons, how-

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ever, are paid wages, or it is found that they soon leave for the towns.

In the limestone districts of Wensleydale and Swaledale there is no tillage land at all. The whole of the holding is invariably in grass, and the only crop, therefore, is hay. This induces a type of farming peculiar to the district, which has been practised from earliest times, but which the gradual substitution of milk-selling in the place of cheese-making is altering in an interesting manner. As this change bears on some points connected with the general question of small holdings, it will be referred to later. The stock kept are shorthorn milking cows; young cattle, which are reared to be sold off to the fattening districts; Wensleydale sheep on the lowlands; and a local breed of Scotch sheep on the moors. Pigs do not seem to be kept to any very considerable extent, though every holding has enough to consume the by-products of the dairy. Poultry are rather largely kept.

The milk, even on the smallest farms, where there are only two or three cows, is made into Wensleydale cheese. There is, however, a tendency at the present time amongst the larger farmers to give up cheese-making for milk-selling. I gathered that there was a very large percentage of bad cheese made now which had contributed towards a wholesale fall in the price of good and bad alike. And whereas 7d. and 9d. a gallon (exclusive of carriage) could be obtained by the sale of milk in summer and winter respectively, it

was difficult to average 7d. the year through by the sale of cheese.

The fields are all small, and divided up by high stone walls, which also serve as efficient shelters against the very cold winds. The land varies in quality according to the depth of soil on the limestone. The very best pastures are amongst the lower-lying ones, where there are several yards of good soil on the underlying rock; they become poorer as the depth of soil lessens, until high up on the hills the moorland is reached. The country suffers very much in a dry season, as the land soon burns on the limestone. After a bad harvest, as there is no other winter keep, stock has often to be sold at a loss. The hay is never harvested earlier than the second week of July, as the lambing ewes off the moorland have to be kept till late in the spring on the pastures which are to be shut up for mowing. This late harvesting at a time when the weather is more uncertain even than in the southern counties has no doubt partly given rise to the method of storing it in stone barns, which stand in the corners of the fields, and in which the cattle are fed and housed in winter. Stacks are never seen, and carting to the homestead is unusual. The hay is dragged on sledges or sweeps straight to the barns. The men have sometimes to walk as much as a mile or two out to these barns twice daily to feed the stock in the winter. The manure, however, is on the spot for the distant fields, and the system no doubt saves an immense amount of

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carting, which is a consideration where no horses are wanted for tilling.

The cows are milked in the fields, and the milk carried up in cans shaped for strapping on the back. Fern and rushes cut off the moor are largely used for litter.

It is noticeable that there is hardly any garden cultivation attached to the houses or cottages. No fruit and hardly any vegetables seem to be grown; even the potatoes are largely bought from the neighbouring tillage districts.

In one village, where there have been several acres of allotments on Lord Bolton's estate for a great number of years, many of them are not cultivated at all, which in former times were much sought after. The general opinion amongst his betters was that 'the labourer is now too well off to care.' The labourer himself was of opinion that, as the soil was poor, and wanted very good cultivation and much manure to make it profitable, it was not worth his while to bother with it after a hard day's work.

### MARKETS.

The middleman is very much to the fore in these districts. Cheesemakers are practically in the hands of factors, who come round the farms regularly; and the business is a good deal spoilt by the value of good cheese being appreciably lowered by the amount of bad cheese made. There is no uniformity in the make, and the advantage to be gained by

some co-operative system in production as in sale is everywhere obvious.

There are good auction marts at Hawes and Hellifield, but the young stock are largely bought by dealers from the fattening districts.

#### LABOUR.

Wages are high, averaging £1 a week. No man will work for less than 3s. a day. On the largest farms the men live in, getting up to £25 to £30 a year. There does not seem much difficulty in getting labour for harvest. Fewer Irishmen come than formerly, but there appears to be a general practice for men out of the manufacturing towns of Yorkshire to come down to their native places for a few weeks at harvest time.

#### PRICE OF LAND, RENT, ETC.

While there are a certain amount of small freeholds, the land is nearly all held under large landowners. Land sold of late years shows an average of £100 for good land down to £25 for poor. Some good accommodation land near Hawes sold last year at the rate of £140 an acre; and an estate in the same district, made up of 13 acres of good land and 16 of bad, had been lately sold for £2,000.

A fair amount of land comes into the market, but prices are falling. A small place in Carperby of 17 acres, which was worth £1,000 a few years ago, had been bought in, last year (1904), at £650;

and at a sale which I attended at Askrigg an allotment of 40 acres of fair land without buildings, which had cost £800 two years ago, was bought in at £650.

This seems due more to want of capital than any desire not to possess land amongst the farmers. Several small places which had come into the market lately had been bought by local dealers and middlemen who did not farm them themselves, and did not make very good landlords.

Rents are very high on the best land and smallest holdings, reaching £3 and £4 an acre. The larger farms run from £1 to £2, according to the type of land and convenience of situation.

#### LABOURERS AND SMALL HOLDINGS.

There seemed to be an absence of very small holdings, except in the neighbourhood of the larger towns. Hardly any existed on which the men worked outside for wages, and there did not seem to be any great demand for this type. It seemed possible for labourers who wished to do so to get on to the larger holdings in time. This may be partly owing to the high rate of wages, which enabled thrifty men to save enough to make a start. It struck me, however, as being to some extent due to the nature of the Yorkshireman, who seems to be endowed with more grit and thrift than is often found amongst the agricultural class. Amongst others who had begun as labourers, I came across a big cattle and sheep dealer with two



## LABOURERS AND SMALL HOLDINGS 41

farms who started his career by gathering bits of wool off the common as he went backwards and forwards to school, and selling sixpennyworth in course of time.

Another man, a mason in a small way, had bought a piece of very poor moorland. He dug several acres by hand, and hacked out enough stones to build 5-foot boundary walls for two fields. The first year he sowed oats, and the second year laid it down to grass. At the time of my visit the fields showed most excellent pasture, which stood out in two bright green patches in the surrounding moorland.

### A TYPICAL FREEHOLD FARM.

The farm had been in the present owner's family for some time. There were 40 acres of pasture in fields of 3 to 8 acres, divided by high stone walls, and a moor run for sheep. Twelve head of cattle besides the sheep could be wintered on this amount of land in a fair season, 20 acres being mown for hay. Cheese was made from May to November. The calves were reared and the young stock sold, or kept according to the amount of winter keep. There were two stone barns in the fields, with accommodation for six to eight head of cattle. The liquid manure from these was carefully collected in stone tanks, and taken out on the grass land periodically. The man worked it himself with the help of a son.

The money on such a farm was practically made

on cheese, sheep, and young stock, the only outgoings being a little artificial food, rates and taxes, and hired labour in a week or two of harvest.

Where sheep formed a large item, as is the case on most of these farms, the price of wool made much difference in their prosperity. It had been as low as  $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. (for Scotch sheep) for many years, and was now making  $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. Otherwise agricultural depression does not seem to have been felt amongst them to any great degree. The men seem to live well, and do not overwork themselves. But they are thrifty, accustomed to work, and good judges of stock, which latter point is often the secret of profitable farming.

To sum up the chief points of this district: Agriculture generally does not seem depressed; the village population is not decreasing, and there is little poor relief. There are not many very large farms, the greater number being of such a size as can be worked by the family, who thoroughly understand their business. There is much good land suitable for milk-production and cattle-rearing, and the poorer land pays well with sheep. The land being more adapted for this class of farming than for tillage no doubt accounts for the fact that there are not many very small holdings used as adjuncts. On the red lands at Kirby Stephen, and nearer towns such as Northallerton, holdings of the latter class occur in fair numbers.

There are good markets in the larger Yorkshire towns, and the great number of visitors to the

district add materially to its prosperity. The high rate of wages induced by the neighbourhood of these towns makes it more possible for the smaller men to rise to independent positions than is often found to be the case; but the personal element is a strong factor in success, the dalesmen having inherited instincts of thrift and independence.

#### DANISH METHODS IN WENSLEYDALE.

There has recently been started at Northallerton a pure-milk factory, run on the lines of the Copenhagen Milk-Supply Company in Denmark.

The building has been put up by the North-Eastern Railway, who lease it to the company, which has been registered as the 'Wensleydale Pure Milk Society, Ltd.' It is too soon yet to anticipate results, but conversation with farmers in the dales from where the milk is collected made me form the following impressions:

That the conditions attached to the initial treatment of the milk at the source are so stringent as to cleanliness, inspection of herds, etc., that, if fulfilled, the milk must have a higher commercial value, from the point of view of the factory, than milk which is not produced under these conditions. Therefore the producers have a right to demand and receive a price corresponding to this enhanced value—that is to say, if the farmers are to be induced to take this matter up and support such factories, a higher price must be paid than the current price obtained by them at present from

other sources where the conditions as to production are more lenient. This principle has been recognized in Denmark, and a slightly higher price than market value is paid by the Copenhagen factory. In England even more than this is necessary—that is to say, the price paid must be sufficiently higher to induce farmers to give up their present contracts—*i.e.*, exchange a paying certainty for a possible improvement. For the factory at Northallerton and all other such undertakings at present are experiments; and a farmer has no inducement to put his faith in experiments *when he is doing well enough* with companies (in spite of the middleman) who have their connections already firmly established. In Denmark the farmer was not doing well, so he was glad to try anything new. He had nothing to lose.

In contrasting the methods of starting this factory with those which would obtain in Denmark, it struck me as being a good example of our tendency to overcapitalize our experiments (I use the word *experiments* advisedly, in contradistinction to *undertakings*). Compared with the Danes, we put too much expensive permanency into the initial construction of buildings, plants, etc., before ascertaining by experience how the concern is likely to work, and what—as subsequent experience only can show—are to be the best lines for running it. I believe, if the Danes had been undertaking the management of the Northallerton Milk Factory, that they would have started it in a wooden shed

under a galvanized roof as a mere protection for the plant ; and *when they had gained the confidence of the farmers*, as well as a certain outlet at the retailing end, they would have thought it time enough to put up the substantial building in which the Wensleydale Pure Milk Company are starting their venture. Then, when the opportunity arose to improve their methods by the introduction of later machinery or a rearrangement of their buildings, the minimum amount of the original capital would be sacrificed, and the wooden shed, having done its work, might be relegated to the scrap-heap without much loss. I noticed another illustration of this principle in the case of farm-buildings in the dales.

Under the old system of farming induced by cheese-making the stone barns in isolated fields were a necessity. Now that milk-selling is being taken up, the cows have to be milked and fed at the homestead for convenience' sake—that is to say, the buildings on a milk-farm are useless as they stand, and are badly wanted at the homestead where there are none. The largest farmers now wish to induce their landlords to let the stone barns fall out of repair and put their money into buildings which will be more convenient for the purposes of milk-sellers. No doubt this will be done in some cases, involving considerable expense. Then, when the slump in milk arrives, and a return to cheese-making will be desired, these time-enduring buildings will be in the wrong place again.

Let us consider how these considerations can be applied to the whole question of small holdings. In regard to small holdings and capital expenditure, it is well known that one of the difficulties in creating small holdings is the expense of the buildings, which cannot be put up at such a price as will afford a profitable investment to the landlord, viewed from a purely commercial standpoint. Here again it is because he wishes to put up a substantial enough building not only to last his lifetime without undue repairs, but still be an asset for his heirs. He also likes to see good buildings on his estate, a shoddy erection being an eyesore on a well-managed property. The result of this is that, from want of means to satisfy these requirements, the idea is not carried out, and the present generation of would-be small holders suffers. The Dane on his freehold (and in some places the Englishman when he has one) puts up at little expense buildings efficient for his immediate purpose, and if in the long run they tumble down, he has meanwhile made his profit out of them, and is free to march with the times and make new arrangements for new requirements.

There are frequent cases to be met with on English estates where large farms have been put in thorough repair at great expense by landlords, which are not, since the times of depression, realizing a rental proportionate to the cost. These places would let well on a smaller scale, but the money has been spent on the large farmhouse and

huge blocks of centralized buildings. This now is so much wasted capital, and no further outlay can be afforded to adapt the estate to the newer conditions of smaller farms, which now yield the best returns.

#### SMALL HOLDINGS AT ROCK AND FAR FOREST, WORCESTERSHIRE.

Rock is a very extensive and scattered parish five miles west-south-west of Bewdley Station. The northern side, which includes the ecclesiastical parish of Far Forest, and abuts on the Forest of Wyre, is entirely made up of small grass holdings, which are farmed by their occupiers in connection with other work. The southern part of the parish is all in large farms.

#### TYPE OF CULTIVATION.

The little holdings are all heavily fruited ; each one has its grass orchard, planted with cherries for the most part ; also apples, damsons, plums, and pears. A good deal of cider is made for local consumption.

The stock kept are milking-cows, calving-heifers, pigs, poultry, and often a pony. Pig-breeding rather than fattening is gone in for ; every holding will have one or two useful sows. The milk is made into butter, and the heifer calves are as a rule reared.

There is very little cultivated ground attached to the holdings. A few roots, and occasionally

vetches and corn, may be grown in the garden for winter keep, but hay mown in the orchards is practically the crop relied on for this purpose. A good deal of hay seems also to be sold off these little holdings to local hay-dealers. The orchards receive most of the farmyard manure, and, except on some of the poorest land, look in fairly good condition. The fruit-trees do not seem to receive any particular attention; while most of them are now at their prime, there are a good number getting too old, and very little fresh planting is being done.

#### SIZE OF HOLDINGS.

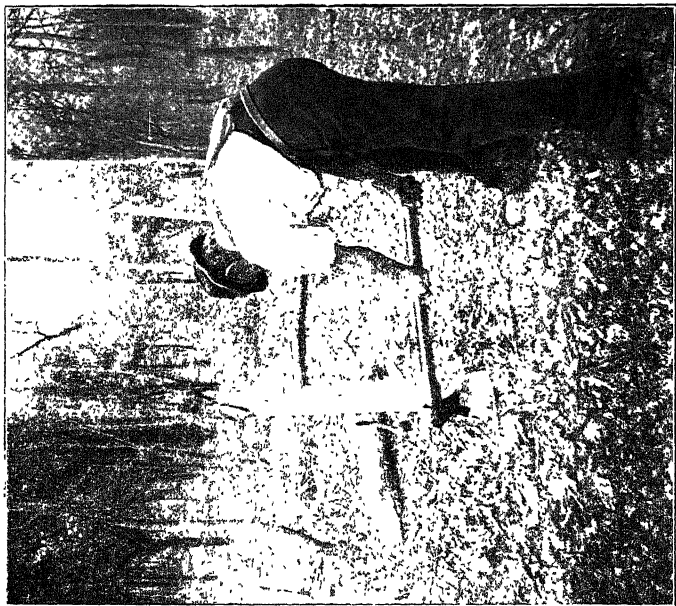
The holdings vary from cottage holdings of 2 or 3 acres up to little grass farms of 20 to 30 acres. The largest in the parish of Far Forest is 40 acres. There are 160 under 20 acres. It is only on the larger sizes that an entire living can be made; and in nearly every case it will be found that, if the man is not in regular work, he has some other means of earning a livelihood.

#### LOCAL INDUSTRIES.

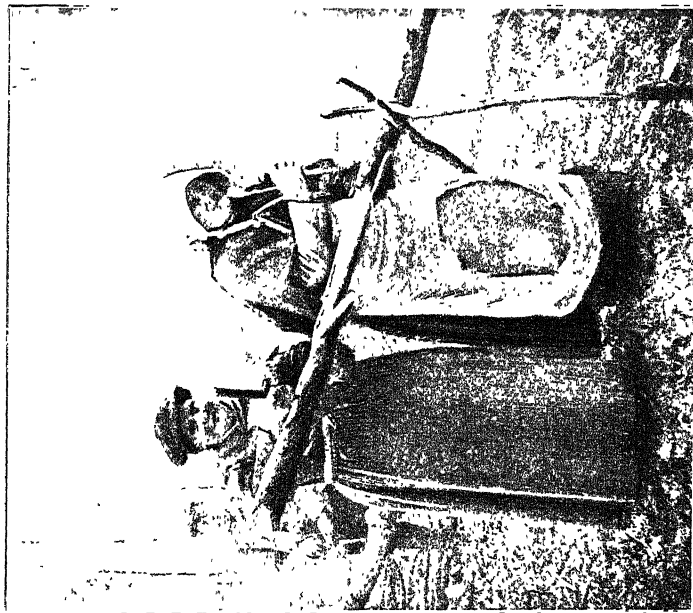
It is, perhaps, the many varied occupations which are open to the people in the neighbourhood which make the small holdings of such value.

The proximity of the Forest of Wyre supplies employment for a number of foresters at different times of the year. In the spring a large number of men and women are engaged in bark-peeling for the Bewdley tan-yards. The young oaks which





BARK PEELING IN THE FOREST OF WYHE.



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are felled for the purpose are used for props in the coal-mines, the branches being sold as bean-sticks and faggots and burnt for charcoal.

The whole job is either let by the landowner on contract to one man, who employs all the labour; or one man is paid by the ton for the bark, getting it at his own risk. The women, who do most of the peeling, get 1s. 6d. a day.

A whole piece of forest will in this way be cleared annually. The saplings which then spring up on the fallen stools are used for the basket-making which is another local industry in connection with the forest.

The baskets are chiefly potato-baskets, which are sold at 14s. 6d. a dozen, and colliery-baskets, a large number of which go to the Staffordshire mines.

Besides this work a number of men find employment as hauliers, hay-dealers, fruit and poultry dealers, and the women earn extra money at fruit-picking, blackberrying, etc. The combination of a small holding with these forms of occupation makes a living possible where it would not be if either form were attempted by itself.

A number of the men in regular employment are miners, and walk five and six miles daily to their work. There being no large farms in the immediate neighbourhood, very few agricultural labourers working for farmers will be found.

## DISPOSAL OF PRODUCE.

Kidderminster, seven miles away, is the principal weekly market. Produce, such as butter and poultry and eggs, is very largely collected by local dealers and higglers to be disposed of here. Many of the people possess a pony and cart, and go in with their own and their neighbours' produce.

During the cherry season a market, attended by wholesale dealers, is held every night at Bewdley; but a large amount of fruit is sold at Kidderminster, or sent on commission to salesmen at Birmingham and other large towns.

## DEMAND FOR SMALL HOLDINGS.

As an illustration of the very great demand that there is, I was shown one little place of 13 acres, of very poor land and with no fruit, which was rented at £35. There were thirty applications for this farm when it was last vacant, and the successful applicant had to pay a lump sum to get in at all.

Another place of 22 acres has recently become vacant owing to the death of the tenant, and has also changed owners. The original rent was £25. Four acres of very poor land have been added, and the buildings are to be repaired. The rent is raised to £45, but, nevertheless, there have been *over fifty* applicants.

A holding of 11 acres was let until three years ago at £15. It was sold by auction, and the new

## COUNTY COUNCIL PETITIONS 51

owner lets it at £30, besides getting £2 a year ground-rent for a building-site.

These are merely instances of the manner in which a very large number of the holdings have been increased in rent, and yet the demand for them is as keen as ever. Apart from the men without land who are anxious to acquire it, many of the men are just short of enough land to make the most profitable use of their time and the land they already possess.

### THE RESULT OF COUNTY COUNCIL PETITIONS.

A petition was sent in to the Worcester County Council in December, 1902, stating the demand for small holdings. An inquiry was held, but nothing further happened. I am informed that the reason given was that at the moment the Council was unable to "acquire a large enough piece of land on low enough terms ; also that there were only a limited number of the applicants able to find the 20 per cent. of the purchase-money laid down by the Act as requisite.

### RENT, PRICE OF LAND, ETC.

The difference between the price of large and small holdings, which is always very marked, is very noticeable indeed here.

The same class of land, rented at from 13s. to £1 in large farms, will fetch from £2 to £4 in small holdings. The actual rent of the small farms varies from 25s. to £4, according to situation, size,

and the amount of fruit. Amongst places visited I found the following rents: A farm of 20 acres, at £3 an acre, with very little fruit; 7 acres at £30, 13 acres at £40, both well fruited; 24 acres at £40.

Some years ago 800 acres of forest land were bought at a little over £4 10s. an acre. The average price for a small farm would be from £50 to £60 an acre. Not many miles away a small plot of sterile land on high ground has been bought for £100 an acre by a town man for building purposes. The competition for any small freehold which comes into the market has become so great owing to this class of purchaser that the prices paid for them are far beyond their economic value to the *bona fide* small holders.

#### CO-OPERATIVE EXPERIMENTS.

There have been two undertakings on these lines in the neighbourhood which have recently been amalgamated under the name of the Forest Supply Association, Ltd.

The Vicar's Farm, Ltd., was originally started by the Vicar of Far Forest, the Rev. G. F. Eyre, to deal with the supply of pure-bred poultry, eggs, and bottled milk, and to give expert advice on matters connected with poultry-farming.

The effect of this venture on the local methods of poultry-farming can be readily traced. Many of the poultry houses and runs have been bought

through the association, and the breeds of poultry have been much improved.

The dairy is supplied entirely by fifteen small holders, representing forty-five cows. The milk is collected from them by the dairy-cart, and the price paid is  $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. and 8d. a gallon for the winter months, and  $6\frac{1}{2}$ d. for the summer. They agree to send a fixed quantity for a period of six months. The dairy will take more if the sale of bottled milk increases, or if the people are willing to supply it at the current butter-making price.

In 1903 the amount of milk dealt with was 13,494 gallons. In 1904, 26,164 gallons, or an average of 503 gallons per week. In 1905 the amount was 20,486 gallons.

The total sales increased from £660 in 1903 to £1,044 in 1904, which sums include milk, poultry, and eggs.

The dairy is at present under the management of a trained lady. Three hands are employed in the dairy, and one salesman with the cart. The carts deliver the bottled produce twice a week to salesmen and private people at Bewdley and Kidderminster, once at Stourport, once at Worcester and Dudley, and once at Lye and the district round.

The sterilized milk is sold in quart bottles at 4s. a dozen, and pint bottles at 2s. a dozen; skim milk at 2s. a dozen for quart bottles; sterilized cream at 8s. and 4s. per dozen of quart and pint bottles; and preserved cream at 11s. and 6s. per dozen.

Any surplus milk is made into butter, but no speciality is made of this part of the business. There appears to be some difficulty in the spring, due not only to the extra quantity in the market at that time, but to the fact that ordinary milk is supplied in Worcester, at any rate, at  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. per quart at the door. It is almost impossible to reduce the price of sterilized milk during this time, the cost of ice, etc., balancing the lower cost price of the milk.

It is calculated that, on the basis of the working staff mentioned above, a supply of 25,000 gallons of milk a year should yield a dividend of 5 per cent.

The Forest Supply Association, Ltd., as distinguished from the Vicar's Farm, Ltd., but with which it is now amalgamated, deals with the supply of feeding-stuffs, manures, seeds, etc., and is under the auspices of the Agricultural Organization Society. It has erected a tin store by the high-road in a central position, where the secretary and manager, Mr. G. T. Forster, attends daily. As a society for purchase it promises to succeed, but as a society for sale, which was part of the original idea, the usual difficulties have been encountered. The people will not be persuaded to change their methods unless they see an *immediate* advantage, and will not support co-operation unless they can invariably go one better than before, and this all at once. A great number of the small people or their wives, as has been mentioned before, are dealers



and higglers. A woman will take 500 eggs to Kidderminster on a market-day, of which perhaps 50 would be her own, and the rest her neighbours', for whom she sells on a small commission. As far ahead as these people can see, their trade or the trade of their neighbours is being taken off them by systems of co-operation; and it will probably require years of patience and very efficient and business-like management to educate them up to the co-operative idea. A weak point in this undertaking seems to be the fact that the people who are responsible for the whole thing are *not* the people actually concerned in the sale of their goods. In this way it differs from Danish co-operative undertakings, and, in fact, is not co-operative in the Danish sense. It may be, however, that this is the only means of beginning in this country with a new idea.

The special considerations on the whole question of small holdings which the circumstances of the locality call up are as follows :

We have here a district made up entirely of small holdings of a natural growth, evidently originated by squatters on the original Crown lands of the forest district. The particular employment engendered by the neighbourhood of mines and forest—viz., of a spasmodic character and with much piecework—has made a small holding a particularly valuable asset as an adjunct to such occupations. This is especially so in the case of the foresters, who are supplied with winter and

spring work, and are free at fruit-picking and harvest times. The number within recent years has become much more limited owing to the buying up of small freeholds, as they came into the market, by retired tradespeople and town men, the place being near to Birmingham, with fine scenery and in a healthy district. Where these purchasers continue to let the holdings to the local man, they, as a rule, form the worst type of landlord, and exact the very highest rent.

The genuine small holder is therefore being placed at a great disadvantage in the exceedingly high rent he has to pay for indifferent land; working it as he does with his other means of subsistence, he is practically forced to pay what he can only recoup by very hard work. There is no doubt that an adequate supply of land in small lots would be a great boon to the deserving people of this district, and enable them to be prosperous where they are now struggling.

II.—SMALL HOLDINGS OF NATURAL  
ORIGIN IN RECENT TIMES.

## THE EVESHAM DISTRICT

(INCLUDING THE PARISH COUNCIL HOLDINGS AT HAMPTON).

The Evesham district has long been celebrated for its market-garden industry. That this type of cultivation is specially suitable for the small man is well illustrated by the fact that 75 per cent. of these gardeners started life as labourers.

There are more than 10,000 acres in the district under garden cultivation in holdings from 1 to 8 acres, and the breaking up of farm lands for this purpose has been steadily on the increase since 1865.

At least half of the borough of Evesham alone is cultivated as gardens and orchards, and most of this land is let at from £4 to £10 an acre. Out of the 567 householders mentioned in the commercial directory lists for Evesham, 138 are entered as market-gardeners. The same thing is found in all the adjoining villages—viz., in the village of Badsey, two, and a half miles east of Evesham, there are 87 market-gardeners out of 98 householders; in Aldington, two miles out, out of 19 householders, 18 are entered as market-gardeners; in Offenham, two miles north by east of Evesham, there are 31 out of 47 householders, etc.

## CLIMATIC CONDITIONS.

The extreme suitability of this district for garden cultivation is primarily, no doubt, due as much to its altitude and sheltered situation as to the character of its soil, for it is found to be a fortnight earlier than other districts of the same soil in more elevated counties. The vales of the Severn and the Avon are not much above sea-level, and the adjoining uplands not more than 100 to 200 feet in altitude. The lower-lying lands suffer extremely from late frosts; and it is a mere lottery whether a good show of blossom means a good harvest of fruit. Most of the men endeavour to get a piece of light land if their other land is heavy, and *vice versa*. In a bad season it often occurs that one piece is a failure and the other a success on account of frosts, drought, etc. The *variety of crops*, also, which the Evesham gardener grows on his land saves him from the entire ruin which would often ensue if he had all his eggs in one basket. It is in this particular, no doubt, that the naturally fertile character of the soil stands him in good stead, as it enables him to crop the land very heavily with rapid successions. High manuring and thorough cultivation, however, must be given its due place in this connection also.

## SOIL.

The geological formation of the Vale of Evesham is partly Keuper marl and partly Lias clay.

In his book on 'Agricultural Geology,' Mr.

Primrose McConnell makes the following remarks on the subject: ‘ . . . The line of demarcation between the brown clay of the Lias and the red clay of the Keuper marl is in many places distinctly seen across the fields. A clod picked up on the Lias shows a laminated structure, while the other shows no structure, the red land caking most after rain. It (the Lias) is a soil that is suitable for the growth of fruit, and the conversion of some of the stiff land into fruit-gardens has been one of the most notable things done in this line.’

He alludes in a previous paragraph to the Lower Lias being characterized generally as an ‘unimprovable stiff brown clay’; and further on says: ‘Though the character of the soil is second-rate in some places, yet it must be noted that there are one or two Lower Lias clay districts which are noted for their farming. The famous Vale of Evesham is situated on this formation. . . .’ He imputes the variation in quality to ‘the particular mixture with adjacent beds which occurs in any given district in the formation of the soil on the surface.’

The general character of the Keuper marl is that of a stiff red marly soil, and it is well known wherever it is found as excellent farming land.

There are, of course, many local variations in the character of the soil, from veins of a gravelly and sandier nature to those of a heavy cold blue clay. It is interesting to notice how the cultivation of these parts is varied to its particular requirements.

The heavy clay is dug with a strong two-pronged

fork, which turns the soil up in big clods, to be acted on by the weather; by constant hand cultivation it seems to be got, in course of time, into a workable condition, when it amply repays for cultivation. I was informed that the asparagus beds last ten or twelve years on this class of land if kept clean, whereas they will often only last seven or eight on the lighter lands. It appears to be possible to work it in wet weather by applying soot, which dries it up and crumbles it.

#### SIZE OF HOLDING.

The land is, for the most part, cut up into 1 and 2 acre lots, although one man generally holds several of these lots, perhaps at some distance from one another.

This is the outcome of the system which has been gradually and naturally evolved in breaking up original farm lands for market-gardening purposes; that is to say, the system by which the small man must start by getting his first acre or two clear and well established under permanent crops—*i.e.*, fruit-trees, strawberries, and asparagus—before he attempts the cultivation of a greater area. The usual practice is, therefore, for the beginner without capital to start with that amount of land which he can be getting ready in this way while he is still working for wages. It will be a few years before these permanent crops bring him any return above his outlay; once they have reached this point, he can then take another acre or two and get it under

cultivation, the proceeds of his first lot enabling him to give up his wage-earning occupation.

The extension of market-gardening in the neighbourhood of Evesham is still of such recent history that one finds most of the present occupiers of land started in this way; and as the method is slowly extending for miles round in all directions, the lots can be seen in all stages of progress. But, at the same time, the system has been going on long enough, especially near Evesham, for many of the cultivated lots to change hands in their present high state of cultivation and with trees in full bearing. By the 'Evesham custom' the incoming tenant pays the outgoing one the value of his improvements, the landlord having no say in the matter beyond the approval of the new tenant, who is generally introduced by the late one. This value is very seldom fixed by paid valuers, but is arrived at by bargaining together, in the same way as if the men were bargaining for a pot of plums or what not. As the price of the 'inging,' as it is locally called, represents a relatively large capital sum, a small man beginning is generally in a better position to get a plot into cultivation by his own labour as before described; but cases are known where the men will have saved a sufficient amount to pay the inging on a plot which is ready for immediate returns. One good season of fruit in this case will repay this initial outlay; on the other hand, a succession of bad seasons will either cripple him entirely if he has no other means to fall back on,

or make it a very hard struggle for many years. It is frequently found that where a family of sons work with the father, an extra piece of land will be got into good condition by the combined labour of the family, when one son will then go on it and work it for himself. There are many of these cases where the father will apply for the transfer of a piece of land to his son of eighteen or nineteen; and as this cannot be done legally till the son is of age, the land stands in the father's name with a clause for it to be changed to the son's when the latter is of age.

#### CULTIVATION OF HOLDINGS.

The *variety of crops* grown is the chief feature of the Evesham holdings. No two plots will be exactly alike, but the main idea is the same—viz., where a whole living has to be made, to get a succession of crops which will bring in money all the year round.

Every holding is planted with rows of plum-trees, chiefly the Pershore plum, and occasionally apple-trees. Between these will be bush fruits, gooseberries or black currants predominating; strawberries and asparagus are also counted amongst the 'permanent' crops, the beds lasting many years if kept clean. Under the trees winter and spring crops are grown to be got off before the leaves shade the ground. These are lettuces, cabbages, radishes, wall-flowers, parsley, and narcissi. Every inch of soil is made use of, and by a system of planting out or sowing a later crop between the



rows of the standing ones, a very rapid succession is arrived at.

Asparagus is the essentially Evesham crop, and its cultivation originally started the breaking up of farm land in small lots. At the village of Badsey, some miles east of Evesham, the land seems almost entirely devoted to this purpose. It is very essential that the land should be thoroughly clean before planting the beds, and the method usually pursued is to grow a cleaning crop the first year, generally peas or beans to be followed by winter cabbage, sprouts or cauliflower. For this the land is occasionally ploughed in the first instance, and then dug with the two-pronged forks in big clods, which are turned over for the frost to act on. More often the whole of the cultivation is done by hand. In the spring the land is then forked by hand preparatory to the cleaning crop. In many cases, if the land is clean, the asparagus is planted out the first spring; rows of lettuces, peas, beans, etc., will be grown the first year between it before the beds are earthed up, and occasionally dwarf peas and beans will be grown on the edges of beds in full cut. The asparagus is not ready to cut till the third year. Whatever the state of the beds, no cutting is ever done after June 26. Cutting, however, must be continued until June 22 at least, otherwise injury is caused by leaving on too much 'prue,' weak bower growing up. The beds are apt to get foul and choked, but if kept properly clean will last eleven or twelve years on the stronger land

If thoroughly manured, the beds would last much longer. Some beds which have been so treated (not in this district) are known to have been in cut for considerably more than fifty years, and are cropping well still.

To give a few examples of typical holdings: One man now holding 13 acres had started as an agricultural labourer with 4 acres of dirty land in poor condition. For years he had had a hard struggle, but was now doing well, and held 13 acres in three different lots, which he cultivated with the help of three grown-up sons. His original 4-acre lot, on which he had himself worked as a labourer when it was farm land, was planted with rows of plums with red currants and gooseberries underneath. One strawberry bed had cabbage planted between the rows, and on another with first-year plants they were pulling radishes; and after picking the fruit, would sow two rows of spring-onions between each row of strawberries.

Rows of peas well up had marrows planted between, each under its own glass cone, a simple device formed by laying a piece of glass over a circular metal hoop which raised it off the plant.

There was celery in frames ready to prick out, and seed-beds of broccoli plants. He kept a horse and dray, and carted a load of produce to the station every day. He sold the bulk of his stuff to commission agents in Manchester. Whatever the struggle may have been in earlier years, he was now evidently doing very well, and the holding

had a general air of prosperity. The whole family were always very hard at work, the women playing as important a part as the men in picking and tying and doing the lighter parts of the work. This man was a type of one who had worked his way up to a secure position.

As an example of one who was at the beginning stage, another holder visited had been in domestic service for twelve years. He was a native of the district, and had always been used to garden work. He had had 3 acres for two years, and was just getting it straight; he was still working for wages as a gardener, and would have to do so until his trees came into bearing, when a good fruit year might set him on his legs. He had planted 200 plums and apples (at 6d. a piece) 9 feet apart in the row; between them were currants and gooseberries. He had besides on his lot beds of asparagus, onions, peas, beans, parsley, strawberries, wall-flowers, forget-me-nots, and radishes. He hoped to get another plot of land when this one was in working order, as he did not consider 3 acres would be enough for a living. He had three brothers with market-gardens close to, and by helping each other at busy times they were able to manage their holdings without employing other labour.

#### PRICES OF PRODUCE.

It is, of course, impossible to give any exact figures as to the possible returns per acre. I was told by a man whose father had kept figures for

some years that the average profit per acre of asparagus on his land had been £75 ; the son, however, thought £50 would be nearer the mark, now. During the time of my visit (May, 1905) it was selling in Evesham auction at from 9d. to 1s. 3d. a bunch of 120 heads. One bunch of specially picked heads weighed 17 lbs., and was priced 7s. 6d.

Radishes were selling at 1s. 4d. a pot, which = 260 bunches of five radishes to the bunch ; 5s. a pot would be considered a good price. It cost 6d. a score to tie the bunches, for which women were employed. (A score = 20 dozen bunches of thirteen to the dozen.) At this low price there was not much profit, and many men whose crops were late were digging their crop in. In a good year plums of choice sorts may fetch £150 to the acre. If the fruit is a failure, the men rely on the other crops they are cultivating at the same time and often on the same ground. If it is a success, they are set up for some time. An average return, according to some of the men who had two rows of plums only to the acre, would be from £10 to £15. The plums are also sold by the 'pot,' which = 72 lbs. net. As an example of the large sums received for 'ingoin,' I was told of a recent case where a man received £200 for  $2\frac{3}{4}$  acres 'ingoin' for asparagus, which had cost him merely rent, labour, and manure for two years.

I was given the following list of prices which should be realized per acre *in a good season* by a gardener who had worked his way up from small beginnings to a fairly large holding.

*Vegetables.*

	£	£			£
Cabbage...	...	35 to 40	Lettuce	...	25
Asparagus	...	35 „ 40	Radishes	...	30
Kidney beans	...	30 „ 35	Peas	...	15
Brussels-sprouts	...	30 „ 35	Cauliflowers	...	20
Vegetable marrow	...	20 „ 40	Potatoes	...	20
Cucumber (outdoor)	...	20 „ 40	Savoy	...	20

*Fruit.*

	£	£			£
Plums	...	40 to 50	Strawberries	...	40
Apples	...	40 „ 50	Gooseberries	...	20
Pears	...	40 „ 50	Currants	...	20

The prices for fruit quoted here are low compared to some given me from other sources.

SALE OF PRODUCE.

There are two auction-marts at Evesham, at which sales are held daily in the summer and three times a week in winter. By far the largest amount of produce sold here is brought in by the little men and bought up by local growers, who are also dealers, and who buy to supplement their own produce. In this way they get a steady supply to send daily to town agents, who supply the local retailers, and can make better terms than if they had to rely on their own growing. Nearly every one of the larger local growers is practically a fruit merchant as well, and draws his supplies from the small men. A large number of the small men will also supply town salesmen direct, especially those who live at some distance and who have a station nearer than Evesham Market. There are also a few men who are supplying direct

‘from the grower to the consumer,’ but, of course, they can only dispose of a very little of their produce in this way. A small percentage only of the stuff goes to Covent Garden ; by far the larger quantity is dispatched to Birmingham and other northern towns.

The Great Western and Midland Railways have special cheap rates for the carriage of fruit and vegetables, and the arrangements they make for the dispatch of these goods have largely contributed to lessen the risk of glut, which would otherwise attend a district where so much is grown.

#### CO-OPERATIVE EXPERIMENTS.

An association for the co-operative disposal of fruit and vegetables was formed in 1903 under the name of the Evesham Growers, Ltd., in connection with the Agricultural Organization Society. It did not, however, meet with the united support of the members, and is now turned into a company. The chief reason for its failure as a Co-operative Association is assigned to the fact that the members did not send their best stuff, and only supported it in a half-hearted way by sending their surplus. The idea of supplying town salesmen direct with the produce, and so eliminating one middleman, did not seem to work out here for the following reason : that it is not possible from one district only to keep up the continuous supply of all kinds of crops all through the seasons. Birmingham, however, which is the Covent Garden of central England, receives

supplies from all the various districts, and town dealers can there buy together all the different kinds of produce to suit their requirements. For this reason they cannot be persuaded to deal direct with certain growers for certain things on any appreciable scale.

#### PARISH COUNCIL HOLDINGS AT HAMPTON.

Hampton is a small hamlet one and a half miles south of Evesham. The Parish Council have here 96 acres let out in acre lots to over sixty tenants. The land was originally a charity farm, and had never been profitable as farm land: 26 acres of it had never been touched for years. For this the Parish Council paid 17s. 6d. an acre, and it is now the best land it has, the tenants frequently making an unusually high price for asparagus on it, for which crop it appears especially suitable.

The Council originally paid £125 for the whole farm, on which there was no tithe. As a farm it had let at £120. They let out the lots at prices varying from £1 to £3 an acre. A large amount of the surplus thus obtained had to be spent in making roads. Arrangements for a twenty-one years' lease have now been completed at £135 a year. The Council acted with extreme forethought in annexing this farm in 1895 at a time when the present great demand for land so close to the town had not reached its height, as will be seen by the fact that tenants of adjoining plots are paying £5 and £6 an acre, besides rates and taxes. The Parish

Council tenants on the 1-acre lots are mostly Evesham artisans and labourers, who work their holdings in the evenings and on Saturdays. Many of the men hold more than one lot, and these are gardeners who have other land elsewhere, the Parish Council lots making up the 4 or 5 acres which are necessary for a living.

When a lot changes hands it is usual for a new tenant to be presented to the Council by the old one, with whom he will have made a private arrangement over the 'incoming.' In cases, however, where the Council has given the tenant notice, the Council pays the 'incoming' to the outgoing tenant, and if a new tenant is unable to pay it straight off, he is charged 10 per cent. on the value until he is able to do so. In this way many small men are enabled to get a start on the land who could not otherwise afford to pay the sum down, which would often amount to £15 to £40 an acre.

The plots are all cultivated in the usual manner of the district as before described. To give a general idea, the following plots were noted down :

1. Two rows of plum-trees, 9 feet apart in the row, down each side, with two gooseberry-trees between each tree. The open space between was in asparagus beds.
2. Two rows of plum-trees as before, with currants underneath and strawberries in the open.
3. Beans, with radishes between. Brussels-sprouts had just gone off.
4. Strawberries with spring-onions between.



5. Rows of young apple-trees just planted with red currants between; spring-onions between the rows; parsley and wall-flowers under the trees.

A few grow rye-grass and clover and corn on the cheaper land, using the straw for litter for the pony and pigs. But where the land is dear this is not worth while, and it pays them better to buy. Not many keep pigs. They rely for manure on artificials, chiefly guano, nitrate, leather dust (preferably from the chamois - leather factories), and shoddy.

Every one who earns his entire living on the land keeps a pony and cart or lorry of some kind. Although this must cost them 10s. a week, it appears to be everybody's ambition in life to possess one; and whenever a good season has set a small man up, the first thing he does is to get a new pony or set of harness. It would be extremely difficult here to instil any ideas of co-operation for the collection of produce, partly because in very many cases the men live some miles from their ground, and the cart is useful for taking out the whole family to their work, returning at night with a load of produce.

#### • SUPPLY OF LAND, RENTS, PRICES, ETC.

Nearly all the small men rent their holdings; the 'Evesham Custom' makes any money laid out secure, so that there is a preference to use available money as working capital rather than invest in the purchase of land. As has been before stated, the

cutting up of farm lands into small lots for market-gardening purposes has been going on steadily for some time. Besides the local people, all of whom are brought up to the business and want land, there has been an influx of people with more or less capital from outside, which makes the competition for land all the keener. Apart from the land immediately round Evesham, where the practice of gardening is of quite ancient date, the cutting up of farms round the adjoining villages is of comparatively recent date, and was in the first instance due to the possibilities attending the cultivation of asparagus accompanying the great fall in agricultural rents on the stiff land. The first one to be selected was a farm of very heavy clay land on which two farmers had failed. On the advice of the agent it was let out in small lots to men in the neighbouring village of Badsey for asparagus-growing. Their success was so great that it was soon found to be the best policy to let out land in this way as the farms became vacant, or to take fields off larger farms for this purpose.

Farms which were let at from 7s. 6d. to 17s. per acre are now let out in lots fetching from 30s. to £3. Many of the best plots fetch £4 and £5 an acre, and close to Evesham as much as £6 and £7 is paid; while for old-established grass orchards up to £10 an acre is paid.

I.



II.



A FARM CONVERTED INTO SMALL HOLDINGS, NEAR EVESHAM.

I. Heavy clay land, usually ploughed with a wooden long-plough and six horses.  
The photograph shows harrowing only.

II. The same, planted with standard and bush apples and black-currents, with  
cauliflowers and sprouts between.

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## COST OF CREATING HOLDINGS.

An experiment was tried on one estate of putting up cottages and letting 4 or 5 acres of land with each. But it has been found that this amount of land is more than a man, without capital to tide him over, can manage, if he has to start with planting it and getting it into garden cultivation. In each case the tenant had to sublet half the land or the cottage.

On the same estate cottages have been put up at £400 the pair and let at £9 9s. each. It is estimated that the increased rent paid for the land attached to them has made the building a profitable investment where it would not have been if the rent of the cottages alone is calculated.

The chief expense connected with the cutting up of the land is represented by the necessity of making roads to make the various lots accessible.

Where the ground is heavy clay the roads are made by burning the clay, which costs  $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. per 39 yards. (Coal, labour and incidentals come approximately to 2s. 6d. per cubic yard ; 1 cubic yard will cover a road 12 feet wide, 9 inches thick, per yard forward. It is not advisable to put a less thickness than 9 inches, as it crushes down to about half when the traffic has been on for a time.)

The following are statistics of actual cases where farms, or parts of farms, have been converted into small holdings of recent years, kindly furnished me by a local man :

*No. I.* (area, 38 acres 3 poles).—Let to a farmer, together with other land and a good farmhouse and set of convenient buildings, at 7s. 6d. per acre up to Michaelmas, 1901; after this, to a man for ordinary agricultural purposes for £40 per annum. He found it did not pay, and gave it up at Michaelmas, 1904. The land was then let out in lots at a total of £52 1s. 2d. for the first year. The present rent is £61 11s. 2d., which is to continue till September 29, 1910, at which date it is to rise to £80 11s. 2d. The land is let on annual tenancies, and if a transfer occurs, the incomer signs the same form of agreement as the outgoer held it on. The landlord agrees to pay compensation *only if he turns the tenant out*. If the tenant wishes to give up, he finds the incomer who will pay him compensation. This estate was rather expensive to set out, as a considerable length of road had to be made, there being no frontage to a hard road. Also a pasture-field had to be crossed which was not let out in lots.

The land was also steam-ploughed once for the tenants, as it was down as clover sward and foul in places.

#### COST OF DEVELOPMENT.

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Burning road ... ..	68	7	2			
Steam-ploughing ... ..	17	0	0			
Less for dilapidation from tenant ... ..	7	10	0			
				9	10	0
Measuring, pegging out with oak pegs, preparing plan and schedule, etc. ...	10	0	0			
				£87	17	2

A pair of cottages were built and let with a portion of this land at a rent of £16 16s., which is not included in the amount above stated for the land rent.

*No. II.* (area, 58 acres 3 roods 28 poles.)—Let as a farm, together with other land, good house and buildings, at 10s. per acre. The farmer wanted a reduction in rent on the whole farm, in lieu of which the landlord agreed to take the above off his hands, as it was all arable except one field of worn-out seeds. It was offered to be let in lots, and the rents received were 20s. and 25s. per acre for the first year; 25s. and 30s. for the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth years; 35s. and 40s. for the remainder of the tenancy.

The land is now at its full rent—viz., £117 10s. 8d. per annum.

## COST OF DEVELOPMENT.

	£	s.	d.
Forming new gateways, hanging gates, etc.	23	17	6
Forming and burning road to back lots ...	30	17	9
Pegs, measuring, plans, etc. ...	10	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£64	15	3

Seven new cottages have been built here at a cost of £350 to £400 per pair, and let at from £8 to £10. These rents are *not* included in the total rent mentioned above.

*No. III.* (area, 19 acres 3 roods 8 poles.)—Let, with other farm land, house and buildings, at 22s. per acre. The farmer gave notice, as he could not make

it pay. It is now let out in small lots at an annual rent of £46 2s.

#### COST OF DEVELOPMENT.

	£	s.	d.
Gates, etc. ... ..	2	16	6
Pegging out, etc. ... ..	5	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£7	16	6

The above fronted a hard road, so that there was no road-making needed.

There have recently been two estates for sale in this neighbourhood, one of 86 acres at the village of Littleton, three miles from Evesham, and one of 53 acres at Bidford, six miles distant. The former was put up in seventeen lots, and the latter in thirty-nine, thirty-three of which were merely building-sites.

From the number of lots withdrawn, or for which there was no bid, it does not seem as if there was much demand to *buy* land in this district.

Amongst the prices realized were £725 for 12 acres; £430 for 5 acres; £530 for 7 acres—all meadow land on main roads. £100 was paid for 2 roods 22 poles of apple and pear orchard by a market-gardener in an adjoining cottage.

#### COUNTY COUNCIL METHODS.

As evidence of the greater demand for hiring than for purchasing land amongst the small men, a petition was made to the County Council to acquire one of the farms above mentioned for



*letting out* in small holdings. An inquiry was held, but negotiations fell through owing to the men not being willing to *buy* and find 20 per cent. of the purchase-money. As the custom established in the country, and proved to be the most suitable for small men, is that of tenancy rather than ownership, one feels that it is regrettable that the Worcestershire County Council should have taken this view. There is a strong local opinion that if the Littleton estate had been offered on a fair tenancy agreement in small lots, it would have fetched from 50s. to 60s. per acre, and the tenants would have been the picked men of Littleton and the adjacent villages.\*

With reference to the above sales, I have received the following communication from Mr. Raymond Webb, a gentleman who, as agent for a large number of small holdings in the district, is well qualified to form an accurate opinion:

‘I think that under the “Evesham Custom” the men are much better off as tenants than land-owners; their money is realizable within a few days usually, and if expended in improving the land or dealing, they get a much higher rate of interest than they would if land was purchased. In other districts where small holdings are very scarce, or transferring not allowed, I can see advantages in purchasing, but not here. In fact, in most cases, I think when a tenant has purchased in this district

\* The County Council has now purchased some of this land.

it has proved to be a mistake on his part. I have often talked to the men about it, and they say the money is of more advantage if they can get at it if they want to deal or what not. I think when this class of men want to invest they don't buy the land they make the money out of, but buy cottage property.'

#### DEMAND FOR LAND.

That there is still an unsatisfied demand for land to hire is shown by the keen competition for vacant plots. One man interviewed, who had secured a 3-acre lot with no crops on it, had to pay £10 to get it; the Clerk of the Hampton Parish Council stated that the Council could let a good deal more land if it could be had. A man ready for a piece of land, whether through having saved enough for 'inging' or having got his original piece established, often has to wait a long time before he can secure it. On the other hand, some of the heavier land some distance away from Evesham, which has already been mentioned as the first land to be cut up, has been thrown up by the small tenants, and is let at a nominal rent to one man, as no other tenants could be secured. The reason appears to be that the men have been able to get holdings nearer their own homes and more conveniently situated for the disposal of their produce; and whilst they were satisfied with this land when no other could be had, they prefer now to wait in the hope of getting the better lots which are at present

occasionally available. I am told, however, that this land, if cleaned and provided with roads, would *now* let out again at a rental of from 30s. to 50s. per acre, as all the other land has since been taken up near to the village.

#### HOUSING ACCOMMODATION.

The housing accommodation in the rural districts round Evesham is very limited, and in some of the villages there is much overcrowding.

In the village of Badsey a large number of houses have sprung up in recent years. Some of them are freehold, having been put up by gardeners for themselves on a piece of land which was on sale in small lots some years ago. Others have been put up as a commercial speculation by a local man—a long, ugly row of ten urban-district-looking brick houses which are let at 4s. a week.

The case has already been mentioned in which cottages have been put up on an estate where the higher rent received for the land attached to them has made the building a profitable undertaking. Many of the men live in Evesham, and hold their land three and four miles away. The population of the town has increased from 5,836 in 1891 to 7,101 in 1901, and a large number of houses are continually being built.

At Bidford, six miles from Evesham, there is a building department included in the local Industrial and Provident Co-operative Society. The society

has this year secured about 10 acres of land for building-sites at £120 an acre.

Money for building a house is advanced to anyone who has been a purchasing member of the society for twelve months, the loan not to exceed £300.

Interest is charged at the rate of 4 per cent., and repayments have to be made monthly at the rate of not less than 10s. 10d. per month per £100 advanced; 4 per cent. per annum is also charged for working expenses. The society also builds houses for purchase, the purchaser either in the first instance paying a guarantee fee of 10 per cent. on the total cost, or, when a tenant of the house he desires to purchase, he pays the instalment weekly as rent. To save expense in conveying, when a piece of land is acquired to be cut up for building or gardening purposes, the first conveyance is drawn up by a solicitor, and the others printed with spaces for names of purchasers, area and price, to be filled in as required.

#### DEGREE OF SUCCESS.

There are numerous cases of men now in good positions and doing business on a large scale who started life with nothing at all. They will be found to have risen by gradually adding more land as they got their former lots established under permanent crops, and at a certain point they all become fruit-dealers to some extent. The smaller men are undoubtedly for the most part doing well, but they have to work hard; and where a good

I.



II.



THE HOUSING PROBLEM IN A VILLAGE NEAR EVESHAM.

- I. The original cottages.
  - II. The speculative builder's remedy.
- N.B.—This is not the only one.



season will set many up in secure positions, one or two bad ones in succession will ruin the less careful. There are, of course, the usual cases of men who never get on, who grow the wrong crops or fail to sell them to advantage. A proportion of these will be hard-working, and fail through lack of intelligence. It is to these men especially that some form of supervision and co-operation for disposal of their produce would be a boon, inasmuch as it would enable them to concentrate themselves on production.

Taking the district as a whole, you find a superior race of working men, with their intelligence keenly sharpened by working for their own advantage and an inborn knowledge of their particular industry—two assets which enable them to work their way up. It must be admitted that men starting now cannot expect to get on with the rapidity that others did in the past twenty or thirty years, as competition and lower prices now make a considerable handicap. Nevertheless, a man who means to work, and has a head on his shoulders, can do far better for himself as a gardener than as a labourer working for a daily wage.

#### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The state of things which one finds in the Evesham district and along the Avon Valley—that is to say, hundreds of families getting a living on 5 and 6 acres of land—is so different from any other part of England that it leads one to

consider what are the special conditions to which these results are due, and whether there are not other places in England equally well adapted for this type of cultivation.

The circumstances which appear to have led to the present conditions are as follows :

1. First and fundamentally, the *forwardness of the district*, due to its altitude and position ; but it is subject to all the havoc of late frosts.

2. The *nature of the soil* ; but it must be remembered that much of the soil in this district is of indifferent quality, and its value is due more to thorough cultivation and high manuring than to anything inherent in its nature. Also we have several instances, two of which have been alluded to, where many small men are earning a good living and paying a high rent on heavy land where farmers had failed. While admitting, therefore, that, in the first instance, the rich soils of the Avon Valley, combined with the early climate, caused the introduction of market-gardening, I would add that the spreading of the industry further afield has educated the local men up to the discovery of how to cultivate inferior soils so as to arrive at the same results.

3. This natural *education* of the local men, emanating from the two factors already mentioned, I would place as a third factor which has contributed to present conditions. Every Evesham man is a born gardener.

4. The facilities for *disposal of produce* is another



factor which has arisen out of the initial ones which favoured production. This is one of the few districts where, owing to the large amount of produce grown, the railway companies and the local people have been able to work together to their mutual advantage. The special railway rates which have been granted in recent years contribute largely towards widening the area for distribution in proportion as the area of production is enlarging. This is also helped by the fact that there are fourteen railway-stations within a radius of five miles round Evesham.

5. The *security for improvements* which is guaranteed by the Evesham Custom of the new tenant agreeing with the other privately on the sale of the 'ingoing.' Every man knows that what he puts into the land he will get back with interest, which is a great incentive to high cultivation.

6. The *variety of crops* grown, by which means the Evesham men have discovered how to insure themselves against the entire ruin which would often otherwise ensue from the late frosts.

It will be seen that out of these six factors, four have nothing to do with the inherent natural circumstances of the district, but have arisen naturally in course of time out of the two first. Moreover, when considering these two—namely, climate and soil—it is noticeable that they are subject to the drawbacks of other areas. In the case of climate, the very earliness of the growth causes, as regards many crops, a greater damage by late frosts than

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in those areas where the growth is not so advanced. In the case of soil, it has already been shown that a large proportion of the area under garden cultivation is on comparatively unfavourable land.

### SMALL HOLDINGS IN THE MARKET-GARDENING DISTRICTS OF BEDFORDSHIRE.

The district round Sandy and Biggleswade in Bedfordshire is practically all under market-garden cultivation. The land is very suitable for vegetable-growing; the warm, sandy soil of the Lower Green-sand formation, which by itself is very sterile, when mixed with the alluvial soil of the Ivel Valley, forms here a very fertile loam.

#### TYPE OF CULTIVATION.

The chief crops grown are brussels-sprouts, carrots, and vegetable-marrows; besides these, there are the different varieties of the cabbage tribe, cucumbers, beet, onions, parsnips, parsley, beans, turnips, etc. Brussels-sprouts are at present a very favourite crop, and there must be many hundreds of acres devoted to it. The reason of its popularity appears to be largely that it supplies more winter work than the other vegetables, being gathered from October to March. It is also suitable for starting with on land which is not yet in a clean condition. Mr. Pratt states in his book, 'The Transition in Agriculture,' that about 40 tons of sprouts would be sent on a busy day from Biggleswade to London in the special

vegetable train which runs four times a week. Of other vegetables, he gives the following figures for busy days in their various seasons :

Spring cabbage	...	...	...	40 tons.
Carrots	...	...	...	60 „
Vegetable-marrows	...	...	...	45 „
Parsnips	...	...	...	60 „
Lettuce	...	...	...	20 to 24 tons.
Cauliflowers	...	...	...	36 tons.

From Sandy, he tells us, the vegetables are chiefly consigned to the northern markets ; that 16 tons of parsley have been sent to Glasgow in a single week, the average annual total being 600 tons ; also 40 tons of bunched carrots have been sent to the same town in a single day, which amount represented 57,600 bunches (of ten carrots each).

#### SIZE OF HOLDINGS.

As regards the size of the holdings, many men are making a living on 7 and 8 acres. The usual practice is to start with an acre or two, and do job-work until they can get on to enough land for a living. It appears to be difficult now for the smaller men to get hold of land close to Sandy, as it is taken up by the most successful growers to add to their holdings ; moreover, the very high rental makes it harder for the small men to get a start. Everyone is brought up to this cultivation, and so everybody wants land, as they know no other trade.

In connection with this fact, it is interesting to note the result of a recent undertaking for the sale of land in small lots, in the immediate neighbourhood, by the Willington Land Company. An account of their undertaking is given in Chapter IV.

#### SMALL HOLDINGS AT UPWEY, DORSET.

In the village of Upwey, half way between Dorchester and Weymouth, there exist such a proportionately large number of small holdings that it would be interesting to inquire into the conditions which have caused them to crop up naturally.

#### SITUATION.

Upwey is situated on the high road leading from Weymouth to Dorchester.

#### MARKET.

The market town is Weymouth, three miles distant. The frequent presence of the Fleet, and the fact of its being a small watering-place, make it a singularly good market for such produce as is usually produced on small holdings.

#### RAILWAY.

The station is Upwey, on the London and South-Western Railway. In spite of the fact that the London and South-Western Railway have provided special facilities and reduced rates for the carriage of agricultural produce, hardly any use is made of them. The bulk of the produce that leaves the

station is fruit, which is sent to Portland. This seems to indicate that the large amount of market-gardening produce grown in the neighbourhood can be disposed of locally.

#### POPULATION.

The population is about 800. The last three census returns show a steady increase; all the other villages in the Weymouth district show a decrease.

#### AGRICULTURE.

The agriculture of the surrounding country is of the usual type on the chalk formation: corn-growing and sheep-breeding on the large hill farms and dairying in the valleys. There has been a tendency to reduce the size of farms. An agent in the district informed me that he always advises the cutting up of very large farms into 200 and 300 acre lots, as no one has the capital now to deal with larger quantities.

In the valley of the Wey, in which Upwey is situated, there is a broad tract of very fertile land which, with its sunny aspect and shelter from the prevalent cold winds, is an excellent forward situation for market-gardening.

#### TYPES OF SMALL HOLDINGS.

The small holdings occur in and about the long straggling village, and are for the most part worked as market-gardens; the remainder are used by their owners in conjunction with some business—one

being a butcher, one a coal-merchant, and one a milk-seller, etc. The market-gardeners all keep a pony or donkey, and take their produce into Weymouth market.

A certain number of them grow a large amount of strawberries, and make a good thing out of them by giving 'strawberry teas' to a very great number of visitors who come down for this purpose out of Weymouth. There seemed to be a growing opinion that fruit paid better than vegetables. That market-gardening is a profitable industry might be surmised from the high prices which were given alike by those who bought their freeholds and by those who rent their holdings; and this in spite of the fact that the prices did not seem to have been artificially raised by the usual competition of neighbouring landowners wishing to add to their estates, or of people desirous of acquiring land for other than economic purposes.

#### PRICE OF LAND AND RENTAL.

The average rental for small plots of land about the village seems to be about £5 an acre, and the selling price runs as high as £250 an acre. I was told that one market-gardener with 2 acres of land and a very small house pays a rent of £60.

#### ACQUISITION OF HOLDINGS.

The greater number of the holdings seemed to date from 1867, when an estate came into the market, 175 acres of which, situated about the village, was

sold in thirty-one lots varying from 1 to 50 acres. Of these, 6 acres divided up into small building-sites averaged £450 an acre.

The lots of from 2 to 4 acres averaged £130 an acre. These smaller lots were nearly all taken up by local working men, and thus a colony of small freeholders was established. Since that time another large farm has been cut up and plots of 50 to 100 acres let out to smaller men, who work them themselves with their families. These men are nearly all milk-sellers.

The fertility of the valley land can be judged by the fact that on one holding of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  acres the owner kept an average of three cows and a pony, with the aid of a little cake.

#### MARKET-GARDENING.

One of the market-gardeners, an intelligent, industrious man who owned his place, did not, however, give a very rose-coloured view. Some years ago, he said, it was a paying business; there was always a sale for anything you grew. Now you could only do well if you grew the right things of the best quality and sold them at retail prices. There was great competition in the place now. It was important that the holding should be of such a size that it could be worked by members of the family; if you had to pay wages or pay others to sell your stuff, it did not answer. Many people lost two days a week taking their produce to Weymouth.

## PARISH ALLOTMENTS.

In answer to a demand from working men, 25 acres outside the village were acquired by the Parish Council at £2 an acre. The land was set out in  $\frac{1}{4}$ -acre plots and let at the rate of £3 an acre, the Parish Councils paying the rates.

At the end of three years the greater number of the plots were given up, and would be on the hands of the Parish Council if some of the market-gardeners had not taken them on as adjuncts to their own land; these, however, are not the class of men for whom they were intended. Many of the plots are now unlet.

In two cases the rent was paid and the land ploughed for the holders by their employer, and they had not troubled to gather the crop. The feeling seemed to be amongst the working men that the land was too far from their homes for it to be worth their while to have the plots (about a quarter of a mile from the centre of the village), and that the rent was too high.

TENDENCY OF SMALL HOLDINGS TO REVERT BACK  
INTO BIG ESTATES.

A retired gentleman farmer, whose family had lived in the district for generations, was of opinion that the small freeholds had a tendency to revert back into larger estates. The owners are invariably heavily mortgaged, and at their death the place



comes into the market and is bought up at a higher price than a working man can give. As an instance he mentioned that a long time ago there had been an exceptionally large number of small holdings in a neighbouring agricultural district which had all been bought up for the Duke of Bedford's estate. The conditions at Upwey were very exceptional, and therefore the holdings might survive. But he was of opinion that the holdings on the farm bought by Sir R. Edgcumbe at Rew would be in the hands of one man in another fifty years; the successful holders were already buying the others out.

If this is the tendency, it suggests the advisability of local bodies acquiring and dividing the land and letting it out on long leases.

#### CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS.

A general consideration of the local conditions shows :

1. A favourable situation on a good road.
2. A very fertile soil.
3. A forward climate.
4. An excellent market for the type of produce.

These conditions created a natural demand for the acquisition of small bits of land, which was taken advantage of when an estate in the very centre of the village was put into the market in small lots. And in spite of the prices paid being apparently very high, they in all probability at the time represented the true value of the land to those

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purchasing it, as there does not seem to have been any competition in the way of a large landowner with a buying-up policy.

### SMALL HOLDINGS AT CALSTOCK AND ST. DOMINICK, CORNWALL.

These parishes are situated on the banks of the River Tamar, where it divides Cornwall and Devon.

They are the centre of the fruit-growing district which supplies the earliest out-of-door English fruit on the markets, and the greater quantity of it is grown by small holders. There are also in the neighbourhood many men renting agricultural holdings of a larger size who appear to have been enabled to work their way up on to farms, having started as agricultural labourers and made money in fruit-growing.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF DISTRICT.

Except in the bottom of the valleys, the land is not very fertile. There is, for the most part, a poor, thin, stony soil, of no great depth, on a granite or slaty rock.

### FRUIT-GROWING.

The fruit is grown on the steep banks on either side of the river, and on the south side of sheltered valleys. The forwardness of the locality seems mainly due to the natural position of the county, and the protection afforded from frosts and winds by the lie of the slopes, and the warmth for early

ripening by the thinness of the soil on the underlying rock.

Cherries, plums, and apples are the chief fruit-trees grown, but the bulk of the land is devoted to bush fruits, especially strawberries. These are for the most part planted on the upper part of the slopes, where they ripen rapidly on the thin rocky soil, whereas the raspberries and black currants are planted lower in the valleys, where the soil is richer and deeper.

An average of 75 to 100 tons of raspberries are despatched every year, representing in value about £1,500 to £2,000, 75 per cent. of which goes to the grower.

Two tons to the acre is an average crop, and £22 a ton an average price for seven years. The cost of picking would amount to about 25 per cent. of this sum.

About 200 tons of strawberries leave Beers Alton Station alone during the season, which only represents a part of the crop grown. At an average price of £20 a ton, this represents a value of £4,000.

#### HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRUIT- GROWING IN THE DISTRICT.

The pioneer of this fruit trade was Mr. J. W. Lawry, a native of St. Dominick. He was brought up on a farm of 90 acres, and succeeded his father as tenant in 1866. In 1862 he was up in London for the Exhibition, and paid a visit early one

morning to Covent Garden, where he was struck with the high price asked for fruit. On his return home he set to work on a small scale, and it was not long before his fruit became the earliest on the London and northern markets. He supplemented his own growing by buying up the fruit in the neighbourhood, and the higher prices he was able to give soon encouraged a general cultivation of fruit in the whole surrounding district. Owing to the enterprise of one man, acres of fruit, giving employment to hundreds of people, are now grown on land which was giving indifferent returns both to the owner and occupier, and the development of local industries connected with the fruit trade has added to the general prosperity of the place.

#### DISPOSAL OF PRODUCE.

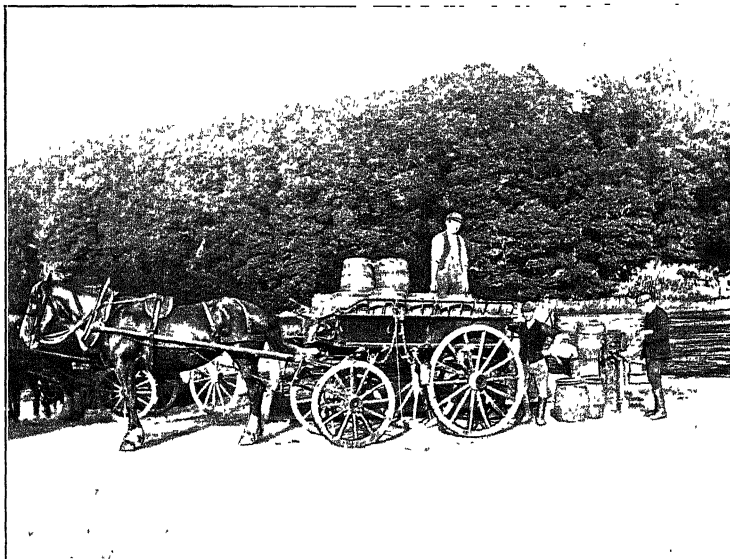
The fruit is despatched to Covent Garden to be sold on commission, and to Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Cardiff, and other northern markets. It is packed in 'punnets' holding from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 pound of fruit, and the punnets are packed in cases. Jam fruit is usually sold to a fruit-merchant and packed in  $\frac{1}{2}$ -cwt. tubs, and resold by the merchant to the jam-makers. The bulk of it going from Beers Alton Station, on the London and South Western Railway, has to be ferried across the river two miles from the station, where it is loaded on to the railway company's vans.

A motor waggon has now been started by the Great Western Railway, running daily between

I.



II.



HOW THE CALSTOCK FRUIT REACHES THE LONDON AND NORTHERN MARKETS.

I. Arriving at the ferry.

II. Unloading and weighing the fruit.

To face page 94



III.



IV.



HOW THE CALSTOCK FRUIT REACHES THE LONDON AND NORTHERN MARKETS.

III. Ferrying the fruit across the river.

IV. Loading on to the railway vans.

To face page 94





Calstock and Saltash (thirteen miles), which is largely used by small men. Their produce can be picked up at certain points on the road, which means a large saving in cartage.

A certain amount of fruit is sold locally to the tourists on the steamers running from Plymouth.

A market steamer also runs three times a week, calling at wharves along the river to pick up produce for Plymouth and Devonport.

#### TENURE OF LAND.

There are a large number of freeholds in Calstock which appear to have existed for some time. There are continual sales, so that it seems possible for anyone anxious to acquire a small piece of land to do so.

In the neighbouring parish of St. Dominick, however, where most of the fruit is grown, the holdings are entirely small tenancies under Lord Mount Edgcumbe and other smaller landowners.

None of the fruit-planting is done by the landlord; the general arrangement is for the incoming tenant to pay the initial cost of planting to the outgoing tenant.

#### PRICE OF LAND, ETC.

The average price for the best fruit land is from £70 to £100 an acre. The poorer land fetches from £30 to £40.

The average rent per acre for the best land is

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£5, and for the poorer £2. As much as £7 and £8 an acre is paid in good situations.

### WAGES.

The average farm wage is 3s. a day.

In the fruit-picking season the men can earn up to 22s. to 25s. a week, the women 16s. to 18s., and a child of fourteen up to 12s.

The school holidays are arranged to fit in with the fruit season.

Besides this, the women and children add considerably to the family income by the making of punnets in the winter.

### PARISH COUNCIL ALLOTMENTS.

There are about 20 acres of Parish Council allotments in St. Dominick, besides some held on Lord Mount Edgcumbe's estate. About half are cultivated for fruit, and the land has greatly improved in value.

There has been practically no change of hands since the Act was passed.

### INSTANCES OF EXISTING SMALL HOLDINGS.

A farm of 90 acres was cut up about six years ago, and is now held by eight tenants.

Forty acres, with the farmhouse and buildings, is farmed as an agricultural holding by one tenant, and the remainder is in 6 to 8 acre lots, and used for fruit-growing, the tenants living in neighbouring houses.

The farm was originally let at £1 an acre, and a considerable portion was planted with fruit by the tenant, who received the initial cost of planting from the next tenant.

Bits of this land are now letting at £6 to £7 an acre, owing to the general rise in the value of land suitable for fruit-growing, since its introduction in the district.

The tenant of the 40 acres is the son of a labourer who held some fruit land, and was able to set his son up on the farm when the land was cut up.

He keeps cows and sheep, and goes in for ordinary farming. He has 600 head of poultry in portable houses on the grass land, which his wife manages as well as the dairy, besides attending Plymouth Market with chickens and dairy produce.

Several labourers are employed on the farm.

Of the men occupying the fruit holdings, two brothers have  $8\frac{1}{2}$  acres, for which they pay £56 a year. Their father was a bargeman, and one of them worked as a gardener until he was able to take this piece of land, which involved paying a sum of about £75 for the original cost of the fruit-trees.

Besides fruit, he grows flowers, chiefly white ones, for church decorations. Several pounds had been realized a year from narcissi planted under plum-trees and between gooseberry-bushes on  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres. One of the plum-trees had yielded 100 pounds of fruit at 5d. a pound.

Pinks were planted all round the edges of the paths and strawberry beds ; the latter appeared to flourish on an extremely thin, stony soil, which in places barely covered a shaly rock. I also noticed cucumbers and gladioli. Every inch of the land was cultivated.

Another man had about 5 acres of fruit, on which he made an entire living. He had been a farm-labourer and odd-job man, getting about 18s. a week taking the year through, besides earning extra money at making punnets. He had taken the land when it was under grass, and planted the larger portion of it with fruit and vegetables himself. He had five small children when he first began, and now the land gives employment to the whole family, as well as to outsiders in picking-time. He had recently paid a boy of fourteen years 15s. for five days' piece-work, and another one of ten years 10s. for five days.

As an instance of the amount of labour employed on land reclaimed for fruit-growing, as many as 200 people have been seen gathering fruit on a tract of land 30 acres in extent which twenty years ago was nothing but coppice. It was let in small plots, and cleared by the tenants, who planted it with strawberries. From being worth 8s. to 10s. an acre, the letting value has now risen to £5 an acre.

The initial cost of clearing is put at £20 an acre, and the annual weeding comes to £5 an acre. A large amount of town manure from Plymouth is

used, which can be landed at a wharf a mile away, and a certain amount of artificial manure is used.

#### FRUIT-GROWING IN CONNECTION WITH SMALL HOLDINGS.

I was informed that the price of fruit has fallen considerably since fruit-growing was first started to any extent, and that it was not possible now to realize the prices that the pioneers of the industry obtained. Judging from the prosperous look of the holdings, the high rate of rent and wages paid, and the fact that every cottage garden and allotment is largely planted with bush fruits, one can only surmise that it is still a profitable occupation.

As the argument is often put forward that fruit-growing is too risky and uncertain in the English climate to be a suitable occupation for small men with no capital to fall back on in a bad season, I made particular inquiries as to the experience of these fruit-growers on this point. The general opinion expressed was that, while one or other of the various crops was sure to be a failure in any one season, there was never an entire failure of every kind of fruit, and that an average return from any one crop was sufficient to pay their way. With a knowledge of the risk incurred, the larger profits from a good season were always looked upon as a security against the possible bad ones in the future.

It must, however, be remembered that in this particular locality late frosts, the bane of fruit-growers, are not felt to any great extent.

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As instances of how fruit-growing had enabled agricultural labourers to rise from their position, I came across the following cases :

1. The son of a labourer now occupying a farm of 150 acres.

2. A man who had worked for 9s. a week and took to fruit-growing fifty years ago. Now his son owns land worth £20,000.

3. A labourer who took an ordinary field off a farm and planted it with fruit with a partner. Now he has bought 5 acres of land at £100 an acre, and lives on it entirely.

An interesting case was that of a man who was one of a family of ten, and had worked on a farm for 15s. a week, rising to 18s. as a foreman. After thirty years' service he went into partnership with his employer over 3 acres of coppice land, for which they paid £5 a year rent. They grubbed out all the roots at a cost of £16 an acre, and planted it the first year with potatoes and then with strawberries. By the end of the term of ten years they each received £300 profit from the sale of fruit. His employer gave up his interest in the land after some years, and the man took it all over. He subsequently took 20 acres more land covered with bracken, furze, and roots, and treated it in the same way. At the time of my visit it was planted with strawberries, raspberries, black currants, gooseberries, plums, and apples. The fruit is sent direct to markets all over England. Fifty workers are employed in the strawberry season. Three or four

men are kept regularly at work besides himself and a partner.

He had, besides, 20 acres of agricultural land on which the crops of potatoes, oats, and mangolds were all above the average, and a stack of at least 20 tons of well-harvested hay stood in the corner of a 10-acre field. His crops afforded a great contrast to those in the immediate vicinity, where the land was occupied by large farmers with very indifferent results.

A purely agricultural holding of 39 acres which I visited was rented by a man at £1 an acre who had begun life as a farm servant. Subsequently he worked in the mines at 18s. a week, and had a small patch of land with a cow or two. He had gradually added to his holding, and is now making an entire living off the farm.

He had nineteen head of cattle, of which nine were dairy cows, Guernseys, and cross-bred Guernsey Devons. He was making butter at the rate of 1 pound a day per cow. He grew oats, cabbage, potatoes, and mangolds, and had wonderfully good crops considering the nature of the land, which was very poor and stony. He went in largely for pigs and poultry. Of the latter he had 200 head. He spent over £40 on feeding-stuffs for the poultry alone, and £100 on that used for cattle and pigs. He made £20 a year clear profit on poultry.

I made a note of him as the case of a man who, by the industry of himself and his family, was not only making a living, but seemed to be prosperous

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on a holding of such poor land and in such an exposed position that not many larger farmers would think it worth cultivating at the rent he was paying.

### LOCAL INDUSTRIES IN CONNECTION WITH SMALL HOLDINGS.

The making of punnets, the small baskets in which the fruit is packed, has developed into quite an important local industry. At the instigation of the principal fruit-grower, who experienced a difficulty in getting adequate supplies of baskets, a Plymouth timber-merchant was induced to set up a factory in the neighbourhood. The wood is prepared and tied up for sale to the cottagers, who manufacture the cases and punnets during the winter season, the work being largely done by the wives and children. The quantity of timber sold for this purpose last year amounted to £500. The manufacture of a gross is considered a day's work in weaving the punnets, which are constructed from the shavings of the timber. The retail price is 2s. 3d. a gross, about 1s. 2d. being the remuneration for the labour. Some idea of the quantity required can be gauged from the fact that on one holding of 30 acres, of which part only was planted with strawberries, 3,000 punnets of this fruit have been gathered and sent off in a day.





II.



A SMALL HOLDING NEAR ST. DOMINICK, CORNWALL.

- I. The unreclaimed land.
- II. The same land supporting nineteen head of cattle on 89 acres.



## CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS.

The suitability of the land and climatic conditions for the *early* maturity of fruit seems to be the fundamental cause of success. To this I would add the initial fostering of the trade by a local practical man with a thorough knowledge of his subject combined with a keen business capacity.

This district is another example of those places wherein the conditions for the natural development of small holdings obtain when these are once started. As a consequence, when land comes into the market, it is found to realize higher prices if put up in small lots for sale or divided for renting, and thus smaller men with little capital have a chance to acquire it; and their previous training enables them to put it to the best use when they have got it.

It is a very significant fact that, in the surrounding parishes, out of 423 holdings of over 5 acres, 107 are occupied by men who were labourers, or are the sons of labourers; in many cases these men have been enabled to take and stock small agricultural holdings, or plant sufficient acreage with fruit to maintain themselves and their families, by means of the extra money they have been able to earn by growing fruit in a small way while working for regular wages.

The usual accompanying conditions of small holdings are also found here in the absence of pauperism and drunkenness. The only paupers

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are those in extreme old age or a widow with a large family.

There is only one public-house where the older residents can remember four or five.

### FRUIT-GROWING DISTRICTS OF CAMBRIDGE-SHIRE.

There are now 4,500 acres under fruit in a radius of seven miles round Wisbech, of which about 200 acres are held by occupiers of from 1 to 3 acres, and 1,000 by occupiers under 10 acres. This was formerly a wheat-growing district; the fruit industry dates from about 1875, at which time it was estimated that there were only about 200 acres under fruit. The pioneers of the industry were Messrs. T. and J. Cockett, who now have over 250 acres, and Mr. Bath, a fruit-grower from Kent, who has 600 acres. The total wages paid by the latter amount to £10,000 a year, the regular hands receiving at the rate of £1 a week for men and 12s. for women. As two-thirds of the hands are local people, it would appear that indirectly these larger growers have considerable influence in the development of smaller holdings by supplying labour which enables the ordinary working man gradually to get in a position to acquire a holding of his own while still working for good wages and learning the business.

There appear, moreover, to be no very large landowners in the district, so that there is not the usual difficulty in obtaining land, which is said to

change hands in the district once in twenty-five or thirty years. It is now mostly in the hands of small occupiers, nine-tenths of whom are owners. The small men are often able to pay for 3 or 4 acres outright, or else contract a mortgage for half or two-thirds of the price, which is, as a rule, gradually paid off.

In the immediate neighbourhood of Wisbech one finds the small men continually putting up their own houses, at a cost of about £150. The average price of land is about £40 to £50 an acre upwards. Ordinary agricultural land lets at from £1 10s. to £2 an acre; if under fruit, its letting value would be £3 and £4 an acre, or more, but most of the fruit land is occupied by its owners. The Parish Councils of the adjoining villages let allotments at from £1 13s. to £1 17s. an acre, which have been the means of enabling many small men to get a start on the land.

#### CULTIVATION.

Most of the fruit-trees seem to have been planted about thirty or forty years ago: they are chiefly apples and plums; bush fruits—strawberries, raspberries, currants, and gooseberries—are planted between the trees. The cultivation differs from that of Evesham in not being so intensive, and in the absence of so much vegetable-growing as is found in connection with the fruit in the latter district. One occasionally sees cabbage and onions, etc., between the strawberries, and bulb-growing

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is just being started, but it is not a universal practice. Asparagus, however, is largely cultivated, and the beds are left down a lifetime. Most of the men keep horses for ploughing, and use light American implements, weeding only being done by hand. Five acres employ all a man's time, and are enough for a living; the men on smaller lots work occasionally for others.

### DISPOSAL OF PRODUCE.

Three railway-lines runs through Wisbech Station, so that there are unusual facilities for disposing of the fruit. Nearly 15,000 tons are sent out annually, and go mostly to Manchester and the northern markets. The railway vans collect produce (except that sold in chips) in a radius of three miles. There are now about twenty vans collecting where thirty years ago one van did it all.

### FRUIT DISTRICTS ROUND CAMBRIDGE.

Since the establishment of Mr. Chivers's jam factory at Histon, four miles from Cambridge, there has been a very great development in that district of small fruit holdings. At first Mr. Chivers had to import raspberries and strawberries from Yarmouth, and could only buy a few hundred-weight locally; now there are more grown than he can deal with.

I was given the following figures, taken at random, of one day's delivery of raspberries at the factory:

## OWNERSHIP AND OCCUPANCY 107

Own growth	...	...	7 tons 7 cwt.
From Cottenham	...	...	7 tons 8 cwt.
From Willingham	...	...	8 tons.
*By train from other villages	...	...	1 ton.

This shows that two-thirds of the supply are drawn from small holdings in the neighbouring villages. From St. Ives, in Huntingdonshire, to Cambridge on one side, and to Ely on the other, the whole country is being increasingly brought under fruit cultivation by the agricultural class. The general method of getting on to a holding is to start with a rood or  $\frac{1}{2}$ -acre allotment while working for wages, growing bottom fruit and potatoes. When this is well established they get a little more land and do job-work, such as ploughing for others, or acting as carriers, taking produce into Cambridge two or three times a week.

### OWNERSHIP VERSUS OCCUPANCY.

Every small man who has saved any money wishes to invest it in land. This is a specially notable point in this district; the one idea seems to be to own land for fruit-growing rather than rent it. It is interesting to compare this with the fruit-growing districts of Worcestershire, where few men want to buy, but all want to rent, land. The prevalence of the 'Evesham custom' may to some degree account for this; it gives full security for improvements, and leaves a man's capital free to go into the land. No such system of security has been developed in the Cambridgeshire districts,

owing, no doubt, to the prevalent habit of acquiring the freehold, which in the first instance probably arose from the fact of land freely circulating in the market, a circumstance which is brought about by the absence of any very large estates. It is probable, however, that when all the land has become fully established under market-garden cultivation, the price at which it will change hands will have a tendency to rise very considerably; and where there is not the same opportunity for the small man to create his own capital by labour on land acquired originally at an agricultural value, it becomes increasingly difficult for him to start on a holding, when that implies laying down a large capital sum.

For the present, this Cambridgeshire district is a splendid example of a natural evolution of small holdings; it shows how, when there are certain initial qualifications combined with a free circulation of land, no artificial interference is wanted; the best type of man gets on to a small holding purely on his own merits, and the unfit are weeded out in a natural manner. It must, however, be taken into account that there is no competition for land here against the *bona fide* cultivator, whether for residential or other purposes, and therefore there is not the same need for artificial interference on his behalf as might conceivably be necessary to safeguard his interests in other localities.



## SMALL HOLDINGS AT TIPTREE, ESSEX.

Mr. Wilkin's jam factory has made the name of Tiptree well known to the public.

The small holdings which abound at Tiptree are largely due, whether directly or indirectly, to Mr. Wilkin's initiative. The basis of the small holding cultivation in these parts is seed-growing. The seeds grown are chiefly mangel, turnip, parsley, cabbage, carrot, nasturtium and other flower seeds. The men appear to be able to make a living on 6 acres, and most of the self-supporting holdings are from 6 to 12 acres. Mr. Wilkin has estimated that there are about 200 small holdings in the immediate neighbourhood, cultivated by about 150 individuals, some having more than one. Most of them are rented, but in a few cases the men have bought their freehold. The usual practice has been for the men to start with a  $\frac{1}{4}$ -acre allotment while still at regular work, and gradually to extend their holdings as they learn the art of growing and dressing the seed. The price received for the seed depends very much on satisfactory dressing, and it is therefore important to success that this art should be thoroughly acquired. If a man is then able to get 3 or 4 acres of land, he can give up regular work. Hardly any capital is required to start; the seed-buyers, as a rule, supply the seeds in the first instance, deducting the value out of the returns, for which they have contracted with the grower. Also,

no building is absolutely necessary, although many put up sheds for dressing.

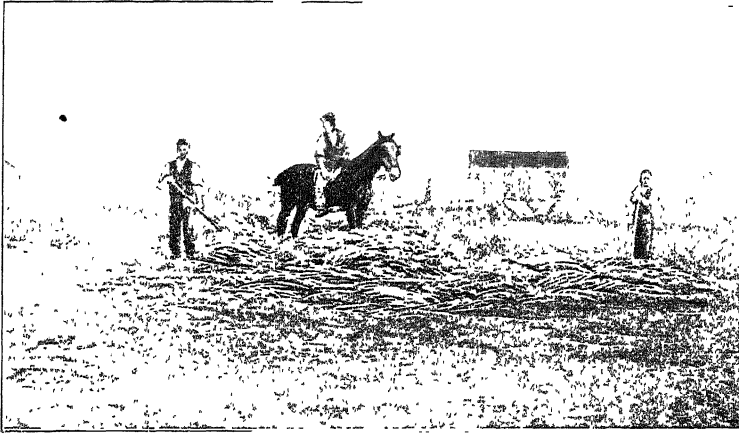
It is, of course, impossible to give exact figures as to the returns per acre. The men admit an average of from £15 to £20 ; probably in a good season it would be very much higher than this.

#### ORIGIN OF THE SEED TRADE AT TIPTREE.

Sutton and Sons tell us that 100 years ago there was no such thing as a definite seed trade. Even up to a few years ago seed-growing was a secret trade, and was confined to a few districts chiefly in the Eastern Counties which are dry and sunshiny, generally speaking, and therefore promote good germination of the seed. In Coggeshall, a small town some miles from Tiptree, seed-growing has been established longer than elsewhere in Essex.

In 1865 Mr. Wilkin, who was then farming and finding it unprofitable, imported a Coggeshall man as foreman in the seed-growing business, to which he was turning his attention. After some years of faithful service this man hired an acre for himself at £3, and grew carrot, mangel, and turnip seed, etc., with such profit that he hired more land. In three years he had created capital sufficient to hire a farm of 100 acres, at which he remained for the rest of his life. One of his sons now farms about 900 acres. He taught his fellow-workmen the art of growing and dressing the seeds, and, beginning in the same way as himself, some of these men are now farming 100, 200, and 400 acres. One hundred

I.



II.



THRASHING KALE FOR SEED ON A SMALL HOLDING NEAR TIPTREE, ESSEX.

The plants are placed on a rick cloth and the horse ridden  
round on them.

To face page 110



and fifty of them altogether hold over 2,000 acres, and are all doing well, with one exception.

In the *Essex County Chronicle* for September 23, 1887, there appears a report of the sale of Gate House Farm at Tolleshunt Knights, which is part of this district. It describes how, through the instigation of Mr. Wilkin, the purchaser of the estate set aside 100 acres to be let in small holdings to local working men who were desirous of obtaining land. A meeting was held, and the terms of letting explained to would-be hirers of land. These terms appear to have been very generous; the rent asked was 30s. an acre, to be paid yearly, whereas smaller holdings in the parish were then fetching as much as £3 an acre. The land was to be held on a seven years' lease, and there were no restrictions as to cultivation beyond those of keeping the land and fencing in good condition. All tithes, rates, taxes, etc., were to be paid by the landlord, and the lease was to be granted free of law charges. As a result of this meeting, the 100 acres were let to eleven men in holdings varying from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to  $38\frac{1}{2}$  acres.

Amongst the holders visited was a son of the man mentioned above who had started the seed-growing industry. The son has 6 acres devoted to seed-growing, for which he pays £2 an acre rent. On his land there were nasturtiums, mangels, turnips, and cabbage growing for seed. He had also a few vegetables for sale in Colchester Market, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre of tomatoes. Three years ago for an acre of outdoor tomatoes he had realized £160, which

represented about 8 tons ; but I was informed about half this would be the usual return. He had also put up a long range of glass-houses.

As an example of the thrift and industry of the local people, he told me how thirty-five years ago ten of them had started a branch of the Wholesale Co-operative Society with a capital of £28. Now they had an annual turnover of £17,000, paying nearly £1,000 a year in dividends. The practice is for the men to buy shares, and let their dividends accumulate until they have a chance to invest in land, etc.

Another holder visited was an old man who had started life as a farm-labourer. He now owned 6 acres and had built his own house. He rented 6 acres besides. He had just finished ploughing a piece of land after a crop of turnip seed, and had it ready for planting with cabbage for seed.

We also visited a 45-acre field which was let in plots to eight people at £42.

The seed crops grown here were chiefly mangel and scarlet-runner beans. The mangel seed crops this year were estimated at about one ton to the acre, worth about £18 to £20.

In considering the factors which have led to this natural development of small holdings, a most important one at the present time is certainly the employment of labour induced by the presence of the jam factory and the company's fruit farms. There are 100 permanent hands employed at the

factory and over 1,000 on the farms in the picking season. Last season (1905) £10,300 was paid in wages. This fact, by which the women and children can add to the family's earnings, has no doubt largely contributed to the possibility of a man starting on a few acres of land and working his way up gradually. It is rather by this indirect way that the factory has helped the small-holding question, than by the more direct way, noticeable in Cambridgeshire, where the establishment of Chivers's jam factory at Histon has helped so largely in the creating of small fruit holdings. All the older holdings at Tiptree are well planted with fruit; but I was informed by Mr. Wilkin that he in no way encouraged the production of fruit on these holdings by buying for his purposes, as the company could only ensure getting the best fruit by growing it themselves on their own farms.

To sum up the features of this case, seed-growing is the basis of cultivation for the smaller holdings; but there is no doubt that the special prosperity of those at Tiptree is also very largely due to the fact that the smaller ones can be used as adjuncts to the labour created by the jam and fruit-growing industry. As an instance of the well-being of the workpeople employed at the factory it might be mentioned that last year eight of them bought plots of land on which to build their houses. The buildings have been erected by the aid of Building Societies or by the employers of the men.

The district is particularly interesting as an

instance of the natural growth of a small-holding system. The men in the first instance have created their own capital, and acquired their holdings purely as a result of their own industry and knowledge. There has been developed on the place by degrees a type of cultivator who now thoroughly understands the profitable working of his district, and who is practically certain of success if he can acquire a piece of land. This demand for land in small quantities by local men who know what they are about in course of time leads to the natural cutting up of land as it comes into the market, or the letting of it in small lots which command a higher rent.

It may be inferred that the example of Tiptree might well be followed in other districts; but while admitting the possibility of this, there are many points to be considered.

First of all, this district is specially suitable for seed cultivation. The land is on a ridge of hills 166 feet above sea-level; the rainfall is very low, and there is much sun; the soil, though rather poor in places, is naturally very dry—all conditions which are favourable to seed ripening. Besides this, it is a business requiring a certain amount of skilled knowledge. Moreover, the demand is small, and merchants require to see the seed growing, so that it is not attempted until a bargain has been made with a seed merchant. I give below Mr. Wilkin's summary of the situation in his own words: 'During my observation of forty-six years every



man started as a poor labourer without capital. Young men are still starting small holdings every year. 'All have improved their condition more or less ; some are still poor, but hold on. One exception has been referred to (a drunkard). Seed-growing as a business is now getting filled up, but there are a score of other things, for knowledge of which let an intelligent young man spend a year or more in Covent Garden fruit, vegetable, and flower markets.'

### CHAPTER III

## THE CREATION OF SMALL HOLDINGS THROUGH PHILANTHROPIC LAND COMPANIES

THE holdings we have been considering in the last chapter form a definite substratum to a regular small-holding system in this country; they are, as we have seen, of many different types, and are scattered widely throughout the kingdom. But ever since the wholesale reduction of holdings in the middle of the last century it has been recognized that a far more wide-reaching and universal system would be beneficial to the nation at large, and not impossible to establish.

There have been, therefore, attempts made at intervals to bring about a greater settlement of people on the land. The various natures of these attempts and their results will now be considered in the following chapters. The holdings which we have already studied showed us the conditions under which new holdings could arise naturally when unhampered by existing laws, or old ones could succeed when already established and the cost of their creation had not to be considered.

But we must remember that in any further undertakings for spreading the system we have to deal with it in the face of these laws, and take into account this cost of creation. The study of small holdings of natural occurrence, therefore, is only of limited value to us if taken alone, and those we shall study in the rest of this book are of a special interest of quite a different nature as indicating what possibilities there are in the direction of future progress.

It is important at the outset to emphasize the fact that there are two quite separate ideas underlying attempts to bring about a greater settlement on the land; it is necessary to distinguish clearly between them, for not only does the particular idea effect the manner of carrying out any experiment, but it has a great influence on the nature of the results which are to be expected. These two ideas are to induce settlement by supplying land to the *bona fide* agriculturist already in the country, or to do so by bringing out townsmen on to the land. A certain confusion often arises in people's minds as to the lessons which are to be learnt from the various experiments, because they tend to apply the results of experiments of the one nature to would-be experiments of the other; for instance, when a colony of townsmen fail under certain conditions, they take that as an argument for the failure of the whole small-holding system under similar conditions, and, conversely, what they see being carried out successfully by trained local agri-

culturists they imagine could be done equally well by townsmen elsewhere.

It must be distinctly understood that, under our present conditions of agriculture, these two ways of establishing small holdings are quite separate problems, although with the same ultimate aim in view. In the one case we wish to find the means of supplying land to that great body of men who do undoubtedly exist in the rural districts, who only leave for the towns because they cannot get hold of land. These men are already trained up in the cultivation of their particular localities : some of them will be naturally intelligent and successful ; others, who might be failures elsewhere, have all the accumulated experience of their forbears as an asset, and will succeed by rule of thumb methods. Moreover, the holdings being a natural outcome of the conditions of the district (or there would not be this demand for them), they will work in with other forms of local employment.

In the other case it is proposed to plant out men now living in towns into small-holding colonies, where they are expected to earn livelihoods by the land alone on definite areas, independently of local connections. In the one case we are fostering a natural growth ; in the other we are trying to establish new and untried methods, probably foreign to the district, and which therefore partake more of the nature of experiments.

Always bearing this distinction in mind, it will now be found most convenient to classify the

various schemes for the artificial creation of holdings according to the methods which have been adopted.

First of all they can be divided into those undertaken by legislative and those by private action. The former type are confined to those created under the Small Holdings Act of 1892, and will be considered in detail later on. The latter type fall under several main headings, to each of which a chapter will be devoted—viz., those initiated by (1) the formation of land companies, whether solely with a view to re-establishment on the land, or (2) merely as a commercial speculation; (3) the work of landowners on their own estates; (4) the acquiring of estates by individuals for the purpose of cutting up; (5) the formation of Small Holdings Associations or the acquisition of land through co-operative societies.

In this chapter it is proposed to consider the formation of holdings by three land companies whose sole object, conducted on business lines, was the settlement of more people on the land. These companies are of particular interest as representing different periods of time, and in a way different shades of thought.

The first one, the National Land Company, was started by Feargus O'Connor, of Chartist fame, in 1845. His idea partook somewhat of the sentimental view of the question of bringing out men from towns into the country. A passage in the company's prospectus gives an idea of the line of

thought on which they acted. 'Heaven's injunction is that man shall eat bread in the sweat of his brow, or, in phrase less figurative, that the felicities of life should be the reward of labour. Heaven's justice is manifest in the fact that with the command to labour was given the land from which to derive the bread. But the land has fallen a prey to ruthless monopoly, and man, in the rampancy of irresponsible power, has driven his brother from those fields where the reward of his toil would be peace, abundance and independence.' The prospectus goes on to show in glowing terms, which, however, would only mislead a townsman, how on 3 acres a man can support himself and a family by producing his own vegetables and wheat, milk and butter, bacon and eggs. The company undertook to supply such holdings ready made, with a house, to start upon at once.

The second company, the Small Farm and Labourers Land Company, was formed exactly forty years later in 1885. Its fundamental idea was a more rational one; it merely aimed, by buying estates to resell in lots, to bring land within reach of all classes of buyers, who were to pursue their own ways of cultivation. The company's methods were to be very elastic, and, whether the purchasers were townsmen or agriculturists, it was hoped the experiment would have the effect of creating a larger number of small land proprietors about the country.

The third company was formed in 1902 under

## THE NATIONAL LAND COMPANY 121

the name of the Cudworth Small Holdings Association. It differs from the other two in being of a much smaller scope, dealing as it does with the creation of one definite colony of small holders only by the resale in small plots of an estate of 367 acres in Surrey.

Each of these undertakings will now be considered in detail, with special reference to their bearing on the question of the further establishment of small holdings at the present time.

### THE NATIONAL LAND COMPANY.

The history of this undertaking is briefly as follows: In 1845 a great meeting was held in London, to which Feargus O'Connor submitted his views on the land question; the result was the formation of the 'Chartist Co-operative Land Society'; this name was shortly afterwards altered to the 'National Land Company.' Shares of £1 6s. each were allotted and paid up in weekly instalments of 3d., 6d., and 1s. Each holder of two shares was entitled to ballot for a house with 2 acres and £15 capital advanced to start with; a holder of three shares could ballot for a house and 3 acres, and £22 10s. capital; a holder of four shares for a house of 4 acres and an advance of £30. The successful allottees became owners of their holdings subject to an annual rent-charge equal to 5 per cent. on the original outlay.

The company bought estates, divided them up

into 2, 3, and 4 acre lots, put up a house on each, and bore the cost of fencing and road-making. The land was ploughed ready, and manure allowed for the first year's cultivation.

In three years 70,000 persons had subscribed, and at one time the receipts were averaging £6,000 a week. £90,714 18s. 3d. had been received by the middle of 1848.

In consequence of this great rush and the clamour for land, the pressure on the directors appears to have been so great that they bought estates just where they could be had at fancy prices and without proper consideration. An endeavour was made to enrol the company under the Friendly Societies Act, but the authorities refused to recognize it as a legal company, the allotting of the land by ballot making it a form of lottery. The supporters of the movement tried to get a Bill through to amend the Friendly Societies Act so as to include the company. This, however, was a failure; and a Special Committee reporting on it to the House of Commons in 1848 stated, amongst other clauses, 'that the National Land Company as at present constituted is illegal, and will not fulfil the expectations held out by the directors to the shareholders.' A few months later an attempt was made to reconstitute it, so as to make it legal; balloting for lots was discontinued, and future allotments were made to the shareholders who had already subscribed the largest sums.

By this time, however, the people had got scared,



and the finances became so involved that the company was finally dissolved by Act of Parliament in 1851. Five estates had been bought by this time—viz., at Minster Lovell in Oxfordshire, Snig's End in Gloucestershire, Lowbands and Dodford in Worcestershire, and Rickmansworth in Hertfordshire. A receiver was appointed by the Court of Chancery, and the rent-charges upon the different properties were put up to sale. In connection with the sale, Mr. Doyle, in his report to the Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1882, says that one of the properties (Minster Lovell) appears to have been sold in lots to various small investors; and that on the other estates, while many of the allottees would have been glad to buy their own holdings, they were not enabled to do so, as the receiver put up the properties for sale as a whole. 'Some of the present occupants have an impression that the receiver, having applied for, and failing to obtain, permission to purchase the property on his own account, commissioned the solicitor of the company to purchase it for him. That gentleman having a large bill of costs, amounting to several thousand pounds, against the company, purchased—but for himself. Whatever may be the facts, the property is now (subject to certain mortgages) vested in the widow of the former legal adviser of the company.'

This, then, was the end of the company as such. But its results have extended on into the present time, and will be studied in the accounts given of

the various estates. The attempt appears in the first instance to have been a failure, due on the face of it to the following reasons: (1) The fact of the original settlers being all townsmen ignorant of agriculture; (2) that they were established under conditions in which it would have been impossible even for an agriculturist to gain a livelihood; (3) the purchase of unsuitable estates, partly owing to the want of practical knowledge on the part of the directors themselves, and partly to the great hurry in which land was bought to satisfy the clamours of shareholders; (4) the financial difficulties, which arose largely from the scare of the shareholders on finding that the company was illegally constituted.

The end of it has been the creation of a certain number of holdings in various districts which have become available for the local agricultural population, and have been cultivated by them with varying degrees of success. I propose to take each of these districts, and trace as far as possible what have been the actual results on them up to the present time.

#### THE MINSTER LOVELL ESTATE.

The estate at Minster Lovell was purchased in 1847. It lies near the village, fifteen miles from Oxford and three from Witney.

It comprised 297 acres, and cost £11,094. There is also a tithe of £89 16s.; the price per acre comes to £37 7s.

The farmhouse and  $44\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land were sold off, and the remaining  $252\frac{1}{2}$  acres were divided into 80 small holdings as follows :

34	holdings	of	4	acres.
16	„	„	3	acres.
30	„	„	2	acres.

£7,380 was spent on cottages, one being erected on each holding. Road-making and fencing cost £3,000. A sum of £1,538 was advanced to the purchasers, who wanted capital to start, at the rate of £15 to a 2-acre lot, £22 10s. to a 3-acre lot, and £30 on a 4-acre lot.

The houses are of the bungalow type, built of stone, and are all of the same pattern. The entrance is into the kitchen in the middle ; on either side is a bedroom, and a back kitchen and outhouse at the back. Some of the holdings have a stable as well, and all have pigsties.

The original settlers were all men from large towns, mechanics, weavers, tradesmen, tailors. The land had been ploughed by the company ready for them to make a start, but they were all unacquainted with any method of cultivation, and soon found out the impossibility of the situation. In the course of a few years they were obliged to return to their former homes. Other people were afraid of the venture after this example, and for some time many of the holdings were empty. The estate had been mortgaged for £5,000, and the interest on this got in arrears. Eventually, in 1850,

the mortgagees foreclosed, and the place was put up to auction in Oxford. The sale was not a success, partly owing to the following notice, which was circulated in the auction room: 'Any persons purchasing any portion of the above-named property advertised for sale at the Star Hotel, Oxford, on August 31, 1850, will thereby involve themselves in a suit in Chancery.'

One cottage with 4 acres was sold for £250, and a cottage with 2 acres for £125. Most of the lots were bought in.

The next year the mortgagees threw the estate into Chancery. Nobody would invest in Chancery property; the vacant lots remained empty, and the tenants who still kept on were in the unsatisfactory state of not knowing what might happen to them at any time. In 1858 the estate was again put up to auction 'by order of the Court of Chancery.' This made the title good, and the lots all sold for good prices, the public confidence being restored.

The purchasers were Witney tradespeople, who bought them as an investment to let, a local landowner, and some labourers. The holdings since then have been held under three forms of tenure: (1) There is the freeholder who has bought his rent-charge; (2) the leaseholder who holds his land perpetually, subject to the payment of the rent-charge to the purchaser of this charge; (3) the ordinary tenant, who merely rents the land, either from the leaseholder or the owner of the rent-charge.

The leaseholders originated in this way: when the company was wound up, a value was placed upon each holding and charged to the occupier; the sum that he had already paid was deducted, and the interest at 4 per cent. on the balance became a ground-rent. These ground rents were sold by auction at the time of the sale, and have often changed hands since.\*

None of the original holders are left; some of the descendants of the second lot, who came in at the time of the sale, are to be found on the place.

In 1889 (according to Mr. Ripley's evidence given before the Inquiry on Small Holdings in that year) the 80 holdings were being cultivated by 60 men.

Of these, 21 owned 30 holdings, of which he estimated 12 were freeholders and 9 were leaseholders with a rent-charge.

The largest holder had 11 acres; when one man held more than one holding, he would sublet the extra cottages for £3 or £4, or use one as a store, etc.

\* If a man buys subject to this rent-charge he is practically the owner, and cannot be turned out as long as the charge is paid. It seems to have been of advantage to many people to be able to buy these plots in this way, having, perhaps, only from £50 to £100 purchase-money to pay. In some cases the owners of the rent-charge have offered to sell it to the occupying owners, and several of them have availed themselves of the offer.

## PRICES.

At the time of the second sale the land was valued at £2 an acre for renting purposes, and the house at £4. This made the total rent of a 4-acre lot £12.

In 1872 the rents appear to have risen to £14, plus tithe at 5s. and 7s. an acre.

At this time a 4-acre lot would realize up to £320.

Ten years later the rental value of the land was said to be worth 33s. ; an adjoining farm had been reduced from 28s. to 18s. per acre.

Mr. Ripley, giving evidence in 1889, put the selling value of a house and 4 acres, *subject to a rent-charge*, at from £30 to £50 ; a few years before one had sold at £130. He mentioned a case where the rent-charge of £9 10s. had been redeemed for £175 ; the owner was emigrating and wanted the money, so this was probably a low figure.

The rents, he said, averaged £10 to £12 for a house and 4 acres ; this would include the £9 10s. rent-charge. Tithe was 6s. an acre ; the total would be about £3 an acre, including the house.

In 1906 two lots sold for £210 ; but one house was in ruins, and the land had got into a bad state of cultivation. If in good condition, the selling value now appears to be from £200 to £240 for a 4-acre allotment.

## TYPES OF CULTIVATION.

The estate is situated on a high plateau exposed to all the winds ; the best land is light, on stone brash or limestone ; the soil is shallow, and drying readily, can be worked in all weathers. It is particularly suitable for potatoes, which with barley form the chief crops, besides which many grow wheat for home consumption, oats, roots, carrots, and fodder crops—vetches and lucerne. All keep pigs and poultry. Men with grass land elsewhere keep a few cows ; those cultivating two or three holdings keep horses and plough, etc., for the men with the smaller lots, or who have other occupations.

A few only go in for market-gardening crops to sell retail in Witney. One man, occupying 7 acres, has nearly all his holding under garden cultivation, and is well planted with apples, plums, cherries, and bottom fruit (currants and gooseberries). He grew vegetables under and between the fruit-trees after the Evesham style. He also grew barley for his pigs, and potatoes for sale to commission agents in Oxford and Bristol. He employed very little labour, but his wife and small children could help a good deal. He kept a horse, and worked part of the land with implements.

‘Nips’—*i.e.*, the refuse from the blanket factories—is very much used for manure. It can be had for 17s. 6d. a ton, which equals about two cartloads.

## DISPOSAL OF PRODUCE.

The market towns are Witney, three miles ; Oxford, fifteen ; and Cheltenham, twenty-five<sup>2</sup>.

At one time the potatoes were largely sent to Cheltenham and Oxford. Now the competition of larger growers makes it more difficult for small men to get the same prices ; many sell to local commission agents, who dispatch in large quantity to Bristol dealers.

Pigs are sold in Witney to dealers. A certain number also go to the Calne factory.

There is a mill in Minster Lovell where the men get their corn ground. They also buy a great deal of barley meal for pig-feeding.

The few who grow vegetables cart them into Witney and sell to private customers or hawk them about. This type of produce is all sold locally.

*In* 1882 the following account is given of a 4-acre lot in a good season :

			£	s.	d.
1	acre	barley (3 quarters at 32s.)	...	...	4 16 0
1	"	wheat (3 quarters at 40s.)	...	...	6 0 0
1½	"	potatoes 60 bags (= 5¼ tons at 10s.)	...	...	30 0 0
½	"	vegetables	...	...	2 0 0
			<hr/>		
			42 16 0		
Less value seed			...	2 0 0	
Ploughing 4 acres at 15s.			...	3 0 0	
			<hr/>		
			5 0 0		
			<hr/>		
			37 16 0		
Deduct rent, tithe, rates and taxes			...	17 0 0	
			<hr/>		
Income...			...	20 16 0	

*I.e.*, 8s. a week, + 1s. 6d. (value of house) = 9s. 6d. for cultivation.



*In* 1889 Mr. Ripley approximates possible returns on a 4-acre holding at £14 10s.—*i.e.*, 6s. a week + the value of the house. The price of potatoes had fallen considerably—averaging 5s. a bag and going as low as 3s. 6d.

## SIZE FOR A LIVING.

Except in the cases of garden cultivation, 10 acres seemed to be considered a possible size for a living. Several are making an entire living by having two or three of the allotments, of which, perhaps, they would be the owners of one or two and rent the others.

The men on some of the smaller holdings work regularly for wages, and get their land ploughed by the larger ones, who keep a horse. Others do job work and fill up their time on the holdings.

One of the holders in 1889 gave evidence before the Small Holdings Commission. He had been a farm-labourer at 10s. a week; he took a 2-acre holding in 1880, for which he paid £8 rent and 13s. 7d. tithe. The value of house-rent out of this would be £3. He grew barley, roots, and potatoes, and kept pigs and poultry. He consumed all his produce on the place, selling only pigs and potatoes. He was now a mason's labourer at 3½d. an hour, and worked his holding in winter and in his spare time. He had to get his land ploughed for him.

There are many instances to show how the best men have been able to work their own way up.

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One man who started on one of these allotments is on a 1,000-acre farm. He made his way by dealing very largely in potatoes. This farm had got into a very bad state and was let at 5s. an acre, which fact, no doubt, enabled him to take it in the first instance. It is said the potatoes he grew on it alone paid the rent.

Another man, starting as a labourer, has now purchased five lots. He had worked his way up, after getting on to one lot, by keeping a horse and ploughing, etc., for others.

The Rev. H. C. Ripley, whose parish comprised both this estate and the village of Minster Lovell, testifies to the very marked effect the presence of the small holdings has on the character of the people in the way of encouraging industry and thrift. 'There is no comparison,' he says in his evidence, 'between the sobriety of the small-holding estate and that of the village. The fact is, the small holders want all their money to put into the concern; they know that every pound they put in will turn another pound. They want it for manure; they want it to put into stock. . . .'

At the time he gave evidence only two inhabitants were receiving parish relief—one an aged widow and one a girl.

### THE DODFORD ESTATE.

Great Dodford is situated three miles from Bromsgrove, in Worcestershire, and about fourteen miles from Birmingham.

The estate when purchased comprised about 280 acres, and cost, including legal expenses, £10,546 18s. 1d. Some of this was resold, leaving about 200 acres for allotment. It was rented originally by a farmer at 14s. an acre, who failed. £10,000 was spent on buildings, improvements, and loans, bringing the total cost up to £20,546 18s. 1d. The value placed on each 4-acre holding was £200 for the land and £120 for the house.

Some of the settlers paid down deposits of £80 to £100, and left the rest at 4 per cent. as a perpetual mortgage or rent-charge. As long as this interest was paid the holder could not be disturbed; he had, moreover, the right to pay off this sum at any time and acquire his freehold, but this does not appear to have been taken advantage of. I was, moreover, informed that after the purchase of the estate by the company's solicitor, the latter had refused to sell the rent-charge to one or two subsequent purchasers of the land who had been anxious to redeem it. When the company was wound up each holding was valued at from £25 to £40 an acre, exclusive of the house at £120; the average price of the entire holding came to about £275. The amount already paid by each holder was deducted from the cost, and 4 per cent. on the remainder was charged to him as a ground-rent.

Writing in 1885, Mr. Jesse Collings mentions an increase in the value of these holdings, and states

that some had recently been sold at £300 and £400, and one had reached £500.

In an account of the place compiled in 1882 by Mr. C. D. Sturge, secretary to the Birmingham Small Holdings and Allotments Association, he says that one-third of the original allottees still remained at that date, and that a large number of the allotments were held by children of the original settlers. Since that time, however, and more especially in recent years, the holdings seem to have been largely bought up by Birmingham manufacturers as a speculation. Some use them for residential purposes, but most of the new-comers let them to working men. On a recent visit to the place I interviewed a son of an original allottee, who informed me that, besides himself, only two of the original families still held plots. He paid £5 a year ground-rent for his 4 acres, and the family had acquired two other lots, which were freehold. This man's father was a native of Glasgow, and was wanting to emigrate when he heard of Feargus O'Connor's scheme. He was a successful drawer at the ballot for lots, and migrated with his whole family. They found the place such a wilderness on arrival that they all returned to Glasgow next day. Six years later they returned for a final settlement. During this time the father employed another allottee to get his holding into order, while he continued his profession in Glasgow.

Most of the settlers were mechanics from the North of England, and in many cases they con-

tinued at their trades, employing Irish labourers to dig their holdings. At first they grew ordinary farm crops, the yearly return from which Mr. Sturge puts at £28. Deducting £8 for ground-rent and taxes, this left them in the position of living rent free, with vegetables and bacon for home consumption and about 7s. 10d. a week. After a few years strawberry-growing was started by one of the allottees, who had been gardener to the Earl of Plymouth. His success induced others to copy him, and from that time prosperity appears to have reigned at Dodford. It was possible then to realize £30 on an acre of strawberries. What with other crops, such as green peas and garlic, and by keeping fowls, the average income derived from the estate rose to about 17s. 6d. a week, exclusive of house rent and produce consumed at home.

The general look of Dodford at the present time is prosperous. The ground is hilly and the 4-acre holdings run up and down the slopes of two nearly parallel undulations. The whole place is cut into squares by the intersection of the 10-foot roads which were constructed to give access to the various plots. These roads are very badly in want of metal, probably owing to the fact that the owners of the adjoining holdings have to keep them in repair. High, thick privet and thorn hedges on each side keep each place fairly private. The fruit-trees, mostly apples planted in the early days, are now well grown up, and give the slopes a wooded appearance. There are many grass

orchards or grass plots, but most of the ground is cultivated with strawberries, bush fruits, and flowers. The soil is a heavy red clay. Poultry, pigs, and horses are kept, but no cows. The buildings for the animals are mostly wooden sheds put up by the occupiers. One holding which I visited was rented by a man who had been in a Birmingham brass foundry all his life; he had always been fond of gardening, otherwise he had no experience of cultivation. Most of his land was planted with strawberries and potatoes and a few bush fruits. He was engaged in planting out garlic between the strawberry-plants. He hawked fruit and vegetables amongst private customers at Kidderminster. The place he was on had changed hands many times, and had just been bought by a Birmingham manufacturer. The ground-rent charge was £4 10s. and 'he daresayed it had cost £300 to buy.' He himself paid £5 an acre rent.

The drawback to the place seemed to be the difficulty in getting manure and in the disposal of produce, which went to Birmingham and Kidderminster for the most part. The people seemed to be doing fairly well, although there were many complaints about the low prices received for strawberries as compared with former times.

How much longer the lots which have not been already bought up will remain in the hands of cultivating occupiers is problematical. The competition of Birmingham capitalists is very strong when the holdings change hands. Many of those

who are now cultivating the lots for a living are paying high rents to new landlords and have no sense of security.

#### THE SNIG'S END ESTATE.

The Snig's End and Lowbands estates are about two miles apart. The Snig's End estate lies in and about the village of Staunton, on the borders of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, half-way between Gloucester and Ledbury. The original estate consisted of 268 acres, and was bought for £12,928 13s. ; 83 houses and road-making came to £18,709 ; and advances to purchasers, £1,400. The total cost was, therefore, £31,637 17s. 11d. The cost of a 4-acre holding, exclusive of the latter sum, works out at £472. On this sum the tenants were supposed to pay 5 per cent., but this was soon found to be quite impossible, and when the company was wound up the ground-rents were fixed at 40s. to 60s. an acre, with 5s. to 7s. tithe. This was very much higher than the rent of land in the district ; however, the holdings were all readily taken up, some by townspeople and a few by agricultural labourers, and leases were sold for £70 and £80, the money being borrowed by a mortgage on the lot. At first some of the people were fairly successful, but none of those who had to depend entirely on their holdings were able to hold their own. Wheat and potatoes were the two main crops, and in the days when wheat was 60s. a quarter and potatoes 1d. a pound a man had been

known to make £100 off his 4 acres. The district seems to have suffered very much in the bad years of agricultural depression. In 1882 there were nine farms on the landlords' hands in a radius of five miles from Snig's End. A small farm of 50 acres, all in grass, which was bought in 1860 at £50 per acre, was sold in 1897 at £15 10s. per acre, and was let at 27s., with a good house and buildings. Another small place of 33 acres had been bought for £1,650, and the owner took up £1,000 upon it. The mortgagee at present, after paying expenses, nets £1 a year over it. It is not surprising, therefore, that the small holdings of the National Land Company suffered also. In 1882 the eighty-three original holdings numbered forty. Twelve were in the hands of mortgagees, who could not find purchasers for them; of the twenty-eight occupiers, twelve were said to be doing well.

At the present time the rent-charge for a 3-acre lot and house is about £8 to £9. Three or four of the holdings have recently changed hands at from £20 to £25, subject to the rent-charge. The owner has also taxes and tithe to pay. In one case, probably typical of many, the holding is let at £9, leaving the owner of the rent-charge considerably out of pocket. A house and garden alone, where the land is let separately, fetches about £2. The average rent for large farms in the district is from £1 to £1 5s. an acre. I was informed that the Snig's End small holdings were cheaper than others in the neighbourhood.



## THE LOWBANDS ESTATE.

Lowbands estate is in the parish of Redmarley, in Worcestershire. It is 170 acres in extent, and was originally divided into forty-five allotments of from 2 to 4 acres. The total amount spent on it was £17,803, of which £8,977 was for the land and legal expenses, and £9,925 for buildings, improvements, and loans. The ground-rent charges here are from 40s. to 47s. an acre, and 6s. tithe. The cottages, which are of the same one-storied pattern as those on the other estates, are built of stone from Malvern quarries. Many of them seem very dilapidated, and are used as outbuildings; some are altogether in ruins, and the land belonging to them has been joined on to adjacent holdings. The place lies for the most part in a bare and exposed position, on the top of a bleak expanse of rising ground. The soil is stiff, and does not look well cultivated. It is off the high-road, and further from any market than Snig's End, which, together with its greater disadvantages of soil and aspect, have made it even less of a success.

By 1882 there were only fourteen owners left. Most of the holdings were mortgaged, and when the mortgagees foreclosed they lost over the transaction, and had to let them out for less than they were receiving from the original owners.

Many people have now got four or five of the allotments and farm all the land, either letting the houses and gardens to farm men working for wages

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or using them as poultry-runs, pigsties, or stores for produce. The principal crops grown are wheat and potatoes, also peas and beans. Many of the plots are laid down to pasture, and there are some grass orchards, but the fruit-trees do not seem to flourish. Several of the original holders tried market-garden cultivation, and took their produce into Ledbury and Malvern ; but there remains only one of this type at present, who is also a carrier, and buys up produce from the others.

### THE HERRINGSGATE ESTATE AT RICKMANSWORTH.

This estate, which is situated about four miles north-west of Rickmansworth, extended to 108 acres, and was originally divided into thirty-four allotments. The cost of the land and legal expenses was £2,420 ; building, etc., came to £7,316. It has now become entirely residential, the lots being disposed of at considerable profit to Londoners. Twenty-five or thirty years ago many of the plots could have been purchased at £30 apiece, subject to the rent-charge. Now, with the old buildings, many plots fetch as much as £1,000, and one 4-acre allotment, with a modern house, has recently changed hands at £1,700.

### GENERAL REVIEW OF FEARGUS O'CONNOR'S ESTATES.

In taking a general review of all these estates, it will be seen that, while Dodford and Minster Lovell have been on the whole successful, the results at

Lowbands and Snig's End have not been satisfactory. When one examines into the conditions of the latter places, one can hardly expect anything else, for every single one of the conditions well known to be essential to the success of any small-holding scheme was ignored. It has been shown how, for a small holding to succeed, either the conditions must be such as to admit of an entire living on a small area, or there must be some form of employment possible as an adjunct to the land. In the light of this let us consider the situation of Snig's End and Lowbands. They are situated in a purely agricultural district, with no railway communication and no markets; the soil and climate are not particularly adapted for market-gardening, and there is no means for disposal of produce. Any small holdings, therefore, could only be worked profitably in connection with some other occupation. There were no opportunities for labour beyond regular (as distinguished from piece) farm work. A farm-labourer in regular work cannot manage 3 acres of arable land by means of his own labour, and there did not seem to be scope in the district for more than a few of the jobbing type, to whom a holding is of advantage to fall back upon.

The number of small holdings wanted, therefore, in the district would be necessarily few, for besides the jobbing labourer, the village artisan or small tradesman would be the type of holder to be benefited. Hence Snig's End, situated practically

in the village of Staunton, did better than Lowbands, which was an isolated colony. But even those few to whom this type of holding would have been a benefit were handicapped by the high rent, which was out of all proportion to the rent of neighbouring agricultural land. This was partly due to the absurd prices which were paid for the land and the buildings. Each 4-acre plot, with its little one-storied house, cost about £472, against the £280 at Minster Lovell and the £320 at Dodford; that is to say, there was an exceptionally high initial cost in an especially low-rented district. Five per cent. on £472 would have made the rent of a 4-acre holding £23 11s., which was of course from the start found to be an impossible figure. But even under these conditions we find instances of men to whom the scheme has in the long run been a benefit, and who have been successful. A certain number have got together enough of the allotments to make a holding of adequate size for their respective needs, and many have done well who were not altogether dependent on the land. These instances serve to show what may be expected of a scheme carried out on wiser lines, just as much as the failures are a warning against trying to establish conditions foreign to a district.

The undertaking at Dodford can be looked upon as a marked success in the long run, after allowing for the natural failures due to the first ridiculous idea that townsmen ignorant of cultivation could make a living on 4 acres by purely agricultural

methods. Minster Lovell, after various vicissitudes, can be considered as distinctly beneficial to the district as soon as the local agricultural population had a chance to get on to the holdings on reasonable terms.

But whether successful or unsuccessful, these experiments serve as wholesome object-lessons, and illustrate the evils which are likely to attend any schemes started without adequate knowledge. Even the prosperous cases have their warnings. At Dodford, for instance, where the cultivating occupiers are successful, the holdings are passing out of their hands into those of absent capitalists.

Mr. Doyle has criticized the whole thing in his report to the Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1882, and is inclined to condemn the possibilities of a further extension of the small-holding system after examining into the failures connected with this particular undertaking. He falls into that error, so common to all who do not take a comprehensive view of the whole question, of generalizing on isolated instances. He emphatically repudiates the idea of anyone making a living on 4 acres, because he confined his inquiries to the estates where this was indeed impossible; Dodford, where it was successfully accomplished, he had not visited. He admits the success of individual cases where the holdings had been amalgamated, or where the holders had other occupations, but does not appear to see that this is in any way an argument for the extension of such holdings. He says that small

holdings are obstacles to the progress of scientific agriculture, and that small holders tend to disappear as farming progresses ; and that this is the result of an economic law, and not of the English system of land tenure. How else, he asks, can one account for their disappearance in the last hundred years ? It is to be hoped that the slight sketch given in the foregoing chapters will already have served to show that this view is not a sound one, and that, while many of his arguments can be admitted to explain the cause of failure of these particular undertakings, they can in no way be applied to condemn the extension of a small-holding system on wiser and more practical lines.

#### THE SMALL FARM AND LABOURERS' LAND COMPANY.

The idea of this company was first started by Mr. Auberon Herbert. In April, 1885, a meeting was held in London to consider it, and was attended by many very influential people. The company was subsequently formed 'for the purpose of buying land and disposing of it in quantities and on terms suited to the wants of different classes of buyers, the main object being the multiplication of land-owners and of those interested in and living on the land.' The method of procedure was to buy land, divide it into small holdings, and sell at a small profit ; then reinvest the proceeds in a similar way. Where the land was sold upon the system of repay-

ment by instalment the only expenses would be the collection of the annual payments, and the capital would keep on returning each year in an increasing ratio for further employment. It will be seen, therefore, that it was practically a necessity for the company to *sell* the land for it to be able to carry on; and, in the opinion of many people connected with the undertaking, it was this absence of the desire to buy which brought the company to an end.

Four properties were acquired: one, at Lambourne, in Berkshire, was presented to the company by Lord Wantage in 1885; two lots of land were bought in 1886 at Histon and Cottenham, in Cambridgeshire; one at Foxham, in Wiltshire, in 1889; and one in Essex in 1890. The land was offered for sale on the following terms: A deposit of 10 per cent. was to be paid on the purchase money; the balance, with interest at 5 per cent., was repayable in equal half-yearly instalments extending over a period of twenty years, or more if required.

It was soon found, however, that, whereas there were plenty of men ready to hire land, there was practically no desire to buy, especially amongst the local people. The working expenses of the company amounted to £400 a year. It was stated in the report of 1892 that only about £10,000 capital had been subscribed, whereas the machinery existed for dealing with £100,000; and if no more capital was forthcoming, the alternative was to reduce expenses and merely look after the estates which

had already been acquired, but which were for the most part only rented from the company. It was resolved, therefore, to abolish the office and secretary in London, and appoint local agents to supervise the different estates. Up to this time the company had declared a dividend every year, which averaged 3 per cent. But, in spite of the economy effected by their change of methods, they were unable to carry on, and the company was dissolved in August, 1901, the estates being put up for sale.

#### THE LAMBOURNE ESTATE.

The Lambourne estate, presented to the company by Lord Wantage, consisted of 411 acres, and had cost about £10 10s. an acre. It had been originally occupied by a bankrupt yeoman farmer, and had been 'over sheeped.' It was, moreover, eight miles from a railway, and there was no market within reasonable distance. No one would have anything to say to it, according to Lord Wantage himself. Two hundred and forty-four acres of down land unsuited for small holdings were sold right off for £1,500. Out of this sum £879 15s. 2d. was utilized in adapting the remainder of the land, and converting the buildings and farm-house into accommodation for two tenants. There were only two purchasers found: one small farmer at Lambourne bought  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres at the rate of £19 10s. 4d. per acre; another man, who hailed from Scotland, but had been a bailiff in England, bought 17 acres of the best arable land at £21 an acre and 2 acres of grass



land at £26 an acre. He paid outright for the grass land. On the other he paid a deposit of £73 2s., leaving a balance of £290, to be repaid in half-yearly instalments, with interest at 4 per cent., in a period of twenty-seven years. This sum amounted to an annual payment of £17 10s. Rates and taxes paid by him brought the figure up to £20. He built himself a concrete house, with four rooms, back kitchen, and dairy, for the sum of £85; also a barn, stable, cowhouse, and pigsty out of timber, and with a thatched roof, for £22. He kept cows, pigs, poultry, and a horse, and grew barley, oats, turnips, and potatoes. He sold butter and part of the grain which was not used for home consumption. He gave his total sales in 1889 as amounting to £60, of which the items were as follows:

				£	s.	d.
Three calves	...	...	...	9	0	0
Butter	...	...	...	18	0	0
Pigs	...	...	...	7	10	0
Poultry	...	...	...	5	0	0
Barley	...	...	...	15	0	0
Oats	...	...	...	3	15	0
Vegetables, potatoes, and skim milk				1	15	0

The poultry and butter were sent to Wantage, seven miles away, once a week by the carrier, and sold to grocers.

This was in 1889, when the man seemed to be able to hold his own. His instalments were paid regularly, and his land well farmed. It appears, however, that in 1894 all the capital which he had paid to the company was repaid to him in

full, and the 17 acres of land went back to the company. Of these, he hired 14 acres at 15s. an acre, and bought the remaining 3 for £60.<sup>6</sup> Two years later he had a fresh agreement, by which he hired 29 acres at 11s. 3d. an acre.

The rest of the farm—viz., 142 acres—had been let to ten tenants in holdings varying from 2 to 36 acres, as a yearly tenancy, with option of purchase. There appeared to be a very good local demand for land to rent. The gross rental received was £182 14s. 2d. The men mostly lived in the village, a mile away. Four were small farmers; the rest were agricultural labourers, small tradesmen, or artisans.

#### THE FOXHAM ESTATE.

The farm at Foxham, in Wiltshire, was bought from Lord Lansdowne in 1888. It lies in the Avon Valley, four miles from Chippenham and six miles from Calne. The land was mostly arable and was of good, easily-worked soil. It comprised 151 acres, farm-house and buildings, and a cottage, with another range of buildings. The price paid was £4,731—about £31 6s. 8d. per acre. The following sales were effected :

The farm-house and buildings, with 50 acres of pasture, were resold to the sitting tenant for £2,250, which is about £45 an acre; 3 acres 31 poles to a local baker for £159 7s., who subsequently bought another 2 acres for £90; 1 acre to a labourer, who built a house upon the ground, for

£40; 1 acre to a labourer for £40; 1 acre for £50 on the deferred payment system; 3 acres for £130; the total sales being £2,800, in seven lots. The remaining 89 acres were let to sixteen tenants, in lots varying from 1 to 22 acres. One of the tenants, the former carter on the estate, rented the cottage and half of some farm buildings, which were away from the homestead. Another tenant with adjoining land rented the other half. The other tenants all lived in the village of Foxham, which is from half a mile to a mile away. There were amongst them tradesmen, labourers, and some dealers and jobbers. There appeared to be a very great demand for land to rent. The rents were due half-yearly, at an average rate of £1 10s. per acre, the gross rental being £166 10s. 5d. At first they were paid very regularly. In 1892 a reduction of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. was given, owing to a general fall in rents in the neighbourhood. Later on a reduction up to 10 per cent. was allowed. In 1899, after offering the land to the tenants, who still refused to buy, the unsold part of the estate was disposed of for £2,000. This sum, added to the £2,800 already received, brought the total receipts from sale up to £4,800—viz., £69 more than the original cost of the estate. About £100, however, had been laid out on adaptations and improvements.

## THE HAY FARM, ESSEX.

This property consisted of 70 acres, a farm-house and buildings, and four cottages. It was bought in 1890 for £1,500, and was at first disposed of as follows :

Two acres were sold for £40 to a London green-grocer, who sublet them in rood allotments. The house and buildings and 50 acres were let off to a farmer, 9 acres to a local small farmer, 2 acres and a cottage to a labourer, and the three remaining cottages to labourers.

The rent received was £87 10s., out of which the company paid £11 3s. 9d. in tithe. They also paid rates and taxes, and £67 was expended in adaptation and repairs.

## THE COTTENHAM ESTATE, CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

The Cottenham estate lies on Smithy Fen, about half a mile from the village of Cottenham, eight miles from Cambridge, and four miles from Oakington Railway-Station. It comprised 57 acres and a small homestead at the time of purchase. Since then two cottages have been erected by the company. It is good fen land, with about 9 acres of pasture.

It was bought by the company in 1886 for £2,050, which sum included £50 legal expenses. This works out at £36 12s. per acre.

The two cottages were built in 1888. Their cost, including other improvements on the property up

to 1892, was £616 9s. 6d. The gross rental received at this date amounted to £116 4s. on the whole estate.

The original idea of the company was to resell the land in small lots on the instalment system.

None of the local men, however, who were anxious to get on to the land would buy at the company's prices, which they considered above the value of the land to them. There were, however, a large number anxious to rent it.

The only purchaser was a stranger to the district, a North-Country man named Atkinson, who had been a joiner and was fond of gardening.

He arranged to buy on the deferred payment system :

		£	s.	d.
9 acres of pasture land at £70	...	630	0	0
2 acres of arable at £50	...	100	0	0
The house	... ..	80	0	0
Making a total of		£810	0	0

He paid £180 0s. 8d. deposit, and the remaining £629 19s. 4d. was to be repaid, with interest at 4 per cent., in thirty years. This amounted to £36 5s. per year.

In 1892, however, a fresh arrangement was made with Atkinson. Up to that time he had paid off £34 8s. 10d., leaving £595 0s. 6d. of the principal unpaid.

He now undertook to pay a perpetual rent at 3 per cent. on £595 0s. 6d. instead of the half-yearly instalments of £18 2s. 6d. (which included

interest at 4 per cent.). This perpetual rent amounts to £17 17s. yearly.

When the company wound up and the land was put up to auction in 1899, this lot is described in the catalogue as follows :

‘ . . . The company’s interest in the freehold land and cottage,’ etc., ‘ under certain contracts with W. A. Atkinson, under which he has been let into possession, paying an annual sum of £17 17s., and has the right on payment of £595 0s. 6d., in manner mentioned in the said contracts, to have the property conveyed to him in fee simple.’

At this sale the lot was bought by W. A. Atkinson himself for a sum considerably less than the above figure.

The other  $44\frac{3}{4}$  acres, which remained on the company’s hands after the sale to W. A. Atkinson, were let to eighteen\* tenants, in lots varying from 1 to 5 acres, at a rental of from £2 5s. to £2 14s. an acre. The company paid rates and taxes. The tenancy was yearly, subject to six months’ notice ; the rents were paid annually.

Of the cottages built in 1888, one was let, with 3 acres, for £13 to a man who also held 3 acres of the company’s other land at Histon.

The other cottage, to which a dairy, cowshed, stable, and fowl-house had been added, was let, in 1892, with  $3\frac{3}{4}$  acres, to a tenant at £15 for the first two years and £20 for the third year. The first

\* This was the number in 1892.

## SALE OF COTTENHAM ESTATE 153

tenant had planted a quantity of fruit, for which the company allowed him £57 compensation when he left, 'chiefly owing to ill-health.' He had also been a stranger to the district and had intended going in for poultry and fruit, having some capital to start with.

In 1899 the whole of the estate was put up to auction in sixteen lots.

At that time there were fourteen tenants, holding from 1 to 7 acres, at an average rent of £1 17s. 6d. an acre, all outgoings, including rates, being paid by the company. The gross rental produced, according to the sale catalogue, was at that time £186 19s. 9d. The result of the sale was as follows :

5 acres	were	bought	by	a	tenant	for	occupation.
3	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
3	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
11 acres	with	a	cottage	(bought	by	Atkinson).	
14 acres	and	2	cottages	and	homestead	were	bought
	by	a	small	local	farmer.		

The remainder of the land (about 19 acres) was bought by the Cottenham Lodge of Foresters, and is let by them to their own members in 1 and 2 acre lots.

The average price made was about £26 an acre.

The land is for the most part under ordinary farm cultivation. Two of the lots, which were originally acquired by 'the foreigners,' as they are termed, have been partly planted with fruit-trees. W. A. Atkinson is still a struggling market-gardener. The other lot now forms part of the

farm of the purchaser of 14 acres, who is doing well on ordinary farming lines. He cultivates 6 acres only of this land and lets the rest ; with other land that he rents, however, he is farming about 20 acres altogether. He keeps a horse, three milking cows, five head of young stock, breeding sows, and poultry. He grows wheat, oats, beans, and mangels, and had a little grass land, but is laying down more. He had put up several wooden buildings and had moved the homestead buildings, which he had bought in the sale, close to his house. His wife and boy help on the farm and he occasionally hires labour in harvest-time. His daughter is able to earn 1s. 8d. a day in fruit-picking time. This man, who was a native of Cottenham, had started as a farm-labourer.

The purchaser of one of the 3-acre lots was a farm-labourer. He had planted some raspberries ; otherwise his land was under corn and potatoes. His master lent him a horse to plough the land, and he worked it himself after work hours. If he could get more land he would be able to give up regular work and get on better.

The Foresters' allotments are all under corn and roots, and look well cultivated.

The local opinion as to the failure of the company as such was : first, that the land was bought at too high a price ; secondly, that the scheme was badly administered by people without local knowledge ; thirdly, owing to the importation of ' foreigners.'



Now that the local people have got in at proper prices the land was paying them, and the result of the land company's venture in the abstract might certainly be called successful—that is to say, when looked at from the point of view of settling small men on the land.

One buyer of land informed me that he could have bought the land originally, at the time when the land company was offering it, but that he, in common with all the local men, knew that their price was considerably above the real value of the land to them; and that the only people who could be got to give this unremunerative figure would be outsiders, who did not thoroughly understand the cultivation of the district in the way the local men did. The one man who did buy was, he expressed it, 'in a trap.' He could not leave without losing the full value of the instalments he had paid up so far, and yet he was unable to make it really pay, so he had to hang on as best he could.

The other 'foreigner,' being only a tenant, had been able to clear out before he had lost everything, and his holding was now held by a local man, who could make it pay. In the long run, when W. A. Atkinson's holding comes into the market, it will probably be bought by a local man at a proper price, who will be able to make a success of it.

The moral of this undertaking seems to be that the local agriculturist has a head on his shoulders, and is not to be tempted by deferred payment

opportunities to acquire land at the enhanced price necessary to make things pay on the lines of the land company's methods; but that when the opportunity occurs to acquire the same land at a reasonable price, the same men apparently find the means to do so without being helped in their payments.

There is a certain irony in the fact that within a few miles of this very place small holdings have been developing at an amazing rate in a natural manner, purely as an outcome of local conditions.

#### THE HISTON ESTATE.

The Histon estate was bought in 1886. It consists of 59 acres, about one and a half miles from Cottenham, and approached from the road from Cottenham to Landbeach down a narrow grass lane. The sum paid for it was £2,131. This includes the cost of enfranchising the land, which was copyhold. A further sum of £100 was spent in draining and cutting open ditches, for the land, which is heavy, was very wet. The total cost works out at about £37 an acre.

No purchasers were found for this land. Thirty-three acres of it were let to ten tenants at a rent of from £2 5s. to £2 10s. an acre; the rest seems to have remained out of cultivation.

In 1892 the gross rental is reported as being £72 12s. 6d., the rents having been reduced to £2 and £2 5s. an acre and other allowances made.

In 1899 the estate was sold to a local farmer and butcher for £700, less £52 costs.

At that time it was let to thirteen tenants in lots of from 1 to 17 acres. The average rent per acre was 29s., the company paying rates.

At the present time this purchaser farms 12 acres himself, and the rest is let to seventeen tenants.

The tenants are mostly farm-labourers. Some have land elsewhere, and make a living on it. One of the latter class, holding 5 acres of this land, had 18 acres altogether. He had 1 acre of strawberries, with onions between, some raspberries, and the rest was in farm crops for his pigs and horses and home consumption.

Most of the smaller plots had one crop right through—either oats, wheat, potatoes, beans, or mangels. One or two men grew onions and carrots, as well as corn and roots.

There were some good crops, especially of wheat, on the land, but it is hopelessly heavy for a small man to work. The access to it is bad and inconvenient, and it is some little distance from housing of any sort.

A more unsuitable place for the purposes of this undertaking could not well be imagined.

Nevertheless, one or two of the men working on the land intimated that they would have been very glad to buy lots at the price at which it was eventually sold, but that, as it was all put up in one lot, they were not given the chance. There was a very great difference between £37 an acre and £12,

and they were of opinion that if this estate had been put up in small lots, the company would have realized a far higher price for it.

#### GENERAL RESULTS.

The Small Farm and Labourers' Land Company came to an untimely end, and it has become customary to cite it as an instance of the failures likely to attend any small-holding scheme; but an unbiassed survey of the whole undertaking hardly seems to justify this view. The small-holding system is not at fault; the main idea of the company's method was also workable, but various conditions in the way of carrying out the scheme caused its final failure.

First, the estates were bought before a considerable fall in the general value of land, and they were sold after a second fall had taken place.

Secondly, they were bought without due regard to suitable conditions: there does not seem to have been anything much done in the way of previous inquiries. They were not supplied as an answer to a healthy local demand, but were acquired on the supposition that the supply would create a demand. The unsuitable estates, which were naturally disastrous failures, were responsible for the financial embarrassments, which did not occur on the more successful ones.

Thirdly, where there was a demand the agricultural labourer wished to hire and not to purchase; there was great difficulty in selling any land. In

consequence of this, the company was unable to proceed on its intended lines, and had standing expenses in the way of agency work in connection with the land of which they remained landlords.

Fourthly, insufficient capital was subscribed to enable the scheme to be carried out on a large enough scale to justify the office expenses, which were on a scale to deal with a very much greater amount of business.

In the light of these considerations, it is unreasonable to argue that the failure of the company has in any way proved the failure of small holdings.

#### SMALL HOLDINGS ASSOCIATION, LTD., CUDWORTH, NEWDIGATE.

The Small Holdings Association was formed for the purpose of supplying small holdings to persons desirous of living on the land and cultivating it; its chief object, as stated in the prospectus, is to promote repopulation of the land and the provision of small farms for deserving members of the working classes. The basis on which it is conducted is defined as 'philanthropy at so much per cent.' According to the articles of the association, the net profits, after setting aside a reserve fund, shall go first to the payment of a dividend, which may not exceed 5 per cent. Any sum remaining over and above this is to be paid over to the small holders for their own benefit, or is to be used in furthering the movement.

The Cudworth estate was bought in 1902. It lies half a mile from the village of Newdigate, in Surrey, two and a half miles from Holmwood Station, six miles from Dorking, and eight miles from Redhill. It comprised 367 acres, with a farm-house and buildings. Most of the land was under grass, about one-quarter being arable. It is for the most part strong clay land.

The estate was purchased for about £10 an acre, and advertised for sale in areas of from 3 to 25 acres, at a price of from £25 to £30 an acre. The terms of sale were 10 per cent. of the cost price, the balance to be paid in half-yearly instalments, extending over ten years, with interest at 5 per cent. The company undertook to put up houses for purchasers on the same terms, except for the deposit, which was to be 25 per cent.

Most of the land was sold during the first two years. The company paid a dividend of 4 per cent. the first year, but owing to the initial cost of adaptation, etc., which falls heaviest at first, paid nothing the second year. At the present time there are twenty-nine holdings, varying from 3 to 25 acres, the average size being about 10 acres. The purchasers are for the most part town men with a little capital. Some of them have built houses and live on their land, cultivating it for part of a living; others are carrying on business in London, and come down two or three days a week. This type of holder goes in chiefly for market-garden produce and poultry. Two only appear to be working their

holdings as a means of an entire living. One of these is a dairyman on 30 acres. His stock consisted of four cows, two yearlings, pigs, and a horse. He had started a retail milk trade in the neighbourhood, and was receiving 4d. a quart. His father, who was a retired coachman, lived with him, and went the milk rounds, leaving him free to work on the land. Three acres only were arable, on which he grew winter fodder. He had a small garden, and had planted some fruit-trees. He appeared to be doing well, but considering the few head of stock kept, if he had not this opportunity of getting a big price for his milk at no cost in the way of delivery, one does not see how it could be managed.

The only other *bona fide* small holder was a market-gardener who hailed from Bedfordshire. He had  $11\frac{1}{2}$  acres, which had been all grass land, but which he was by degrees getting under market-garden cultivation, entirely by spade labour. The first year he employed men to trench the ground at 1s. 6d. a pole.

He had planted apples, plums and damsons, currants, strawberries and raspberries, with vegetables between the rows. He sold his stuff to greengrocers in Redhill and Reigate. The drawback to the place, in his opinion, was the difficulty in disposing of the produce: the distance to markets was so great that half a day was wasted several times a week getting rid of the stuff. There was work on the place at the time for five or six men, which, if the capital were available to invest in this way,

would enable him to make a profitable return ; but the high initial cost of having to acquire the land, cultivate it, and plant it all at once, made it a very hard struggle for the small man who had not much capital to start with.

Looking at this undertaking as a whole, one can at once see that it is not going to do much towards establishing the *bona fide* agriculturist on the land. No ordinary agricultural man would have the wherewithal to pay down such a large deposit and pay off the instalments so quickly, especially without any exceptional advantages which might enable him to make an immediate profit on his holding. There is no doubt that where capital has been available the holdings which have been developed, especially by planting fruit-trees, have increased in value, and in that way may prove in the long run a good investment. Being near London and well situated with fine views, it is probable that the estate will eventually become chiefly residential. A certain amount of land speculation has already begun, one or two of the original purchasers having disposed of part of their property at enhanced prices, and one man is starting to build several houses on a plot as a speculation.

#### GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.

So much for philanthropic land companies : the philanthropy and the percentage are equally problematical. The lessons we have to learn from them are that they do not appeal to the rural man,



except when he can hire land under them. Much of his disinclination to buy may be due to want of capital, but much of it seems also to arise from his own shrewd knowledge of what is going to benefit him and what is not. The people who have come forward are small capitalists, cranks, and the odds and ends of roving agricultural adventurers. There has been a smattering of really successful men, some failures, and a number belonging to that class who would have been failures if they had had to make a living off their land.

Each undertaking is useful in its own way as an object-lesson. We see how, in the case of the two companies whose fates have become matters of history, although the local agriculturists refused to buy when the land was offered to them on the ridiculous terms of their would-be benefactors, there were men amongst them willing to do so when the crash came; for then the land had to be disposed of at its ordinary market value. In these cases the 'foreigner' who failed has been replaced by the local man who is now succeeding. Until the crash comes the cautious local rustic is content to laugh in his sleeve as he digs the new-comer's land at a higher wage than he was receiving from his former local employer.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CREATION OF SMALL HOLDINGS THROUGH COMMERCIAL LAND COM- PANIES

IN the last chapter we considered land companies which were started as philanthropy on a business basis, for the definite object of increasing settlement on the land. Generally speaking, they have been managed by men either without any real business capacity, or without any very intimate knowledge or any experience at all on the subject, their chief, if not only, qualification for what they undertook, being an enthusiasm for the object in view. We have seen that, in the case of those which were established long enough ago for results to be judged, as commercial transactions they were failures.

There is another style of land company which is run purely as a commercial speculation, and does not pretend to be philanthropic. This sort appears to be successful from a business point of view, and, as a matter of fact, caters for exactly the same class of persons as those with whom the

philanthropic companies found they had to deal—viz., townees, or stray semi-cultivators with a little capital.

#### HOMESTEADS LIMITED.

Foremost amongst these at the present time are Homesteads Limited, who are perhaps best known for their estates near London, which are purely residential. But their operations are extended in very wide areas, and they possess estates for reselling in Berkshire, Wilts, Shropshire, Oxfordshire, Dorsetshire, and Hampshire. It is noticeable that, although the repayment by instalments is on fairly easy terms, and that there are absolutely no restrictions on the freehold, a *bona fide* local agriculturist is seldom a purchaser. The customers are, almost without exception, drawn from a distance, or if local people, belong to the 'retired' class with some capital, or others who buy for purely residential purposes.

The terms of Homesteads Limited are as follows :

The company are prepared to sell any lot to suit the purchaser's requirements. The land is all tithe and tax free, and is conveyed free, with immediate possession. The price varies according to situation from £20 to £45 an acre. The terms of payment by instalments are as follows :

'£10 per cent. deposit, and the following easy payments per first of every month to pay off each £100 of principal and interest in a number of years :

Amount.				Amount.			
£ s. d.				£ s. d.			
5 years ...	...	1	19 2	14 years ...	...	0	17 6
6 „ ...	...	1	13 6	15 „ ...	...	0	16 9
7 „ ...	...	1	9 6	16 „ ...	...	0	16 1
8 „ ...	...	1	6 4	17 „ ...	...	0	15 6
9 „ ...	...	1	4 0	18 „ ...	...	0	14 11
10 „ ...	...	1	2 2	19 „ ...	...	0	14 6
11 „ ...	...	1	0 8	20 „ ...	...	0	14 1
12 „ ...	...	0	19 4	21 „ ...	...	0	13 8
13 „ ...	...	0	18 4				

*Example.*—A person buys £100 worth of property, and pays 10 per cent. deposit; this leaves a sum of £90 due, which can be repaid by 252 monthly instalments (21 years) of 12s. 4d. each. Payments can at any time be made on account of principal, and the remaining instalments will be reduced proportionately.

#### ORDINARY MORTGAGES AT 5 PER CENT.

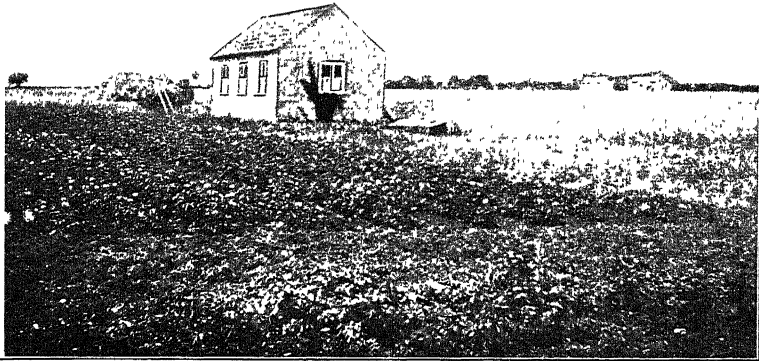
‘A purchaser paying down £20 per cent. deposit can have an ordinary mortgage for the balance of the purchase-money at the rate of £5 per cent. per annum, payable quarterly, and so long as the interest is punctually paid and covenants performed the principal has never been called in.’

The company are prepared to put up bungalows for customers if required; many of the purchasers have, however, put up their own houses.

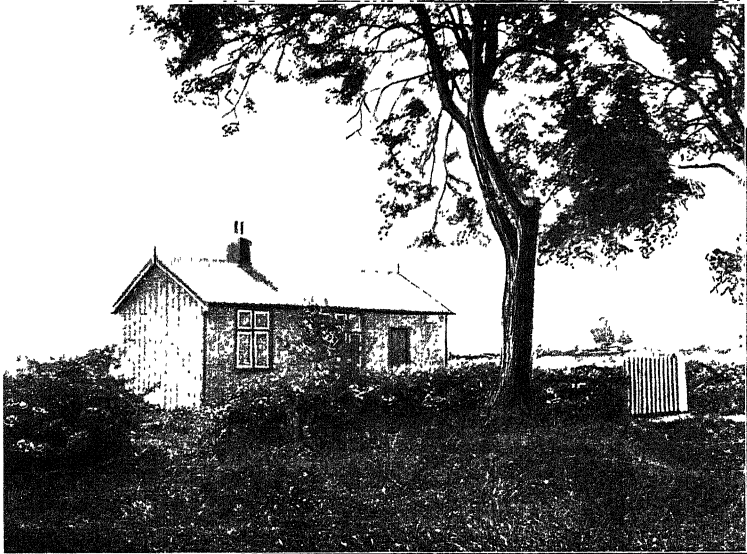
An acre of land with a wood and iron bungalow consisting of a living-room and two bedrooms can be had for £100. The larger bungalows, with four good rooms, cost £175.

There are no restrictions of any sort after once the land has been purchased.

I.



II.



BUNGALOWS ON THE ESTATE OF HOMESTEADS LIMITED,  
AT CARTERTON, GLANFIELD, OXFORDSHIRE.

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THE ESTATE OF HOMESTEADS LIMITED AT  
CARTERTON, CLANFIELD, OXFORDSHIRE.

This estate of 740 acres was bought by Homesteads Limited in 1901 to resell in small lots.

It is situated fifteen miles west of Oxford, in an open, undulating country. There are two stations within two miles—Bampton and Alvescot. The nearest market towns are Witney, five miles away, Faringdon, seven miles, and Fairford, eight miles.

The property is very well adapted for cutting up; two good roads intersect it at right angles, giving nearly six miles of frontage for building-sites, and affording an easy approach. There appears to be plenty of water at a moderate depth; several wells have been made 15 feet deep, and the property is bounded for two miles by a stream.

The buildings at the time of purchase were a good farmhouse and two cottages.

Forty houses have now been built, and over two hundred people are living on the land. The company are at present converting one of the farm buildings—a large cart shed—into a cottage.

All the purchasers so far have been strangers to the district, and are largely town men with a little capital. No lots have been purchased by local agriculturists. The character of the purchasers and their occupations is very varied.

There are now three small dairy farmers—one of whom holds 6 acres and one 12 acres—who supply milk and butter to the other inhabitants. Two

general stores have been started, and a third one is being built. A post-office has been installed, the postmaster, who is an old coastguardsman, holding 7 acres of land.

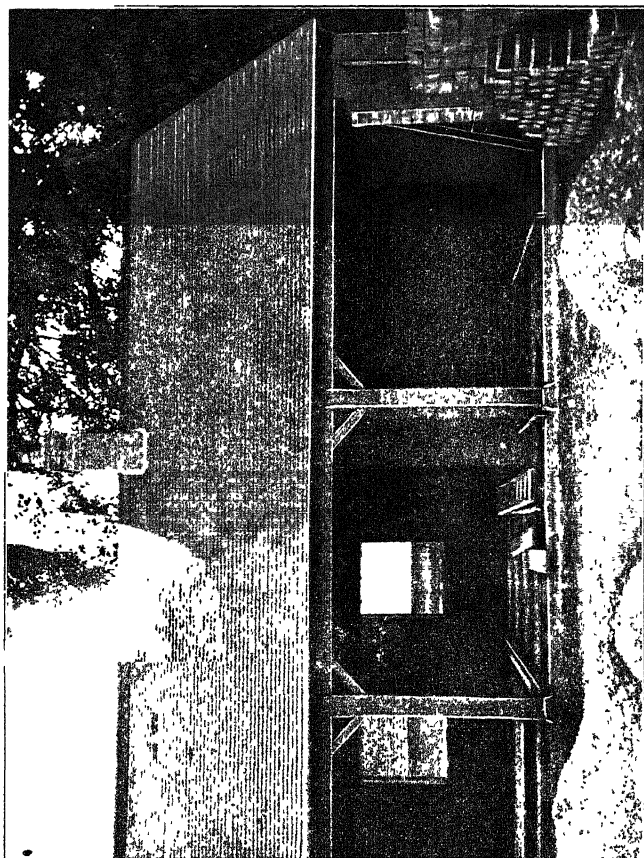
There are several market-gardeners holding about 8 acres, and some poultry and rabbit farms. An Aberdeen farmer has started on 6 acres, and had good crops of potatoes and corn. Another small farmer, from Buckingham, had got 4 acres into a very tidy condition, with good crops of beans, potatoes, and barley; he also went in very largely for poultry. His bungalow was built of brick and stone, with a tiled roof.

None of the produce is disposed of at local markets. What is not consumed on the place is sent chiefly to Birmingham, or the people supply their friends in towns.

It is at present too soon to judge of the ultimate effect of this undertaking. The local native opinion is that when the 'foreigners,' as they call them, have spent all their capital and returned to the towns, the local agriculturist will be able to acquire the holdings at a reduced figure, and make more of a success of it. There is no doubt, however, that among the present settlers there are many men who understand their work, especially in the market-gardening line, and seem to be doing well.

This estate at Carterton will serve as an example of what is happening on the other land acquired by the company at a distance from London. As fast as one estate is fairly developed a new one is



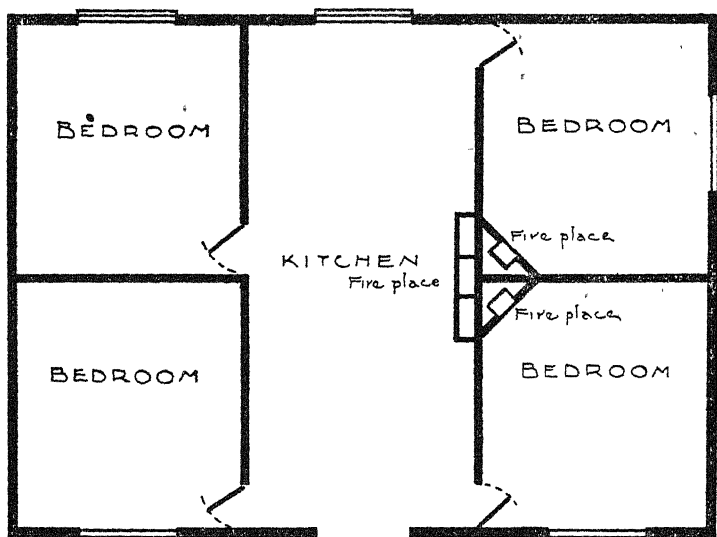


THE ADAPTATION OF FARM BUILDINGS.

A cart shed being converted into a five-roomed cottage.

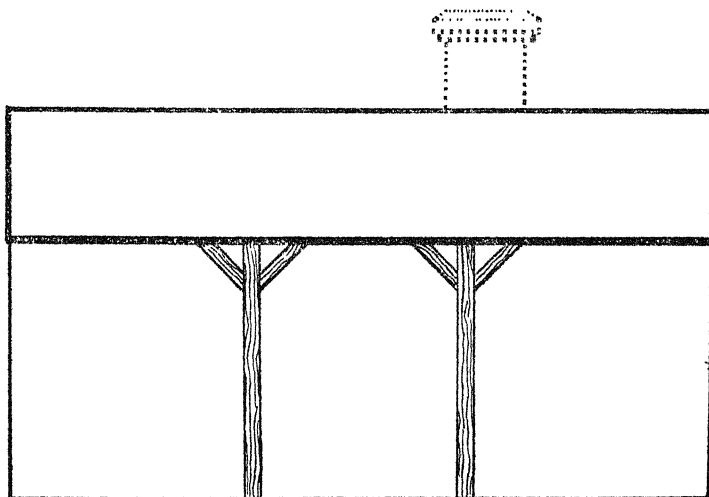
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GROUND-PLAN.

Divided into five rooms with  $4\frac{1}{2}$ -inch brick dividing walls, one chimney-stack serving kitchen and two rooms. Open ends bricked up, leaving window and door openings.



OPEN CART-SHED.

Being converted into cottage with five rooms.

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acquired, a method of procedure resembling that which it was intended the Small Farm and Labourers' Land Company should adopt.

### THE WILLINGTON LAND COMPANY.

Mr. A. J. Keeble is another company promoter for selling small quantities of land. Amongst his ventures is the Willington Land Company, formed for the resale of an estate bought in 1904 from the Duke of Bedford. The estate is 2,900 acres, and includes the village of Willington of 200 inhabitants, lying four miles east of Bedford and four miles west of Sandy. Although bordering on the market-gardening districts of Sandy mentioned in Chapter II., this land had all been let in large farms, and the soil is not so good as that nearer Sandy. It is now being bought up largely for market-gardening purposes.

The price ranges from £30 to £180 an acre, the agricultural land being from £30 to £80, and the higher price is asked for building-sites on road frontages.

One hundred and fifty lots have been bought right out. The agent informed me that the purchasers were mostly market-gardeners; except for a very few, they would appear to be men with a certain amount of capital to start with. The unsold land is let in 5 and 6 acre lots to local men until purchasers are found, at a rate of £1 10s. to £3 an acre.

There seems to have already been a certain amount of speculation in the transactions. The value of land has gone up since the original purchase of the estate, and I was told that a good many lots originally bought by local farmers or tradespeople are now being sold or let out at enhanced prices. One working man bought 5 acres for £250, and has since resold 1 acre of frontage for the same sum.

Only a very few *bona fide* small men have purchased holdings. At the same time there is a very great demand for such holdings to rent. In the cases where land had been bought by men with capital and let out in plots of 5 to 6 acres there was keen competition for these holdings. One man had twelve applications for a 5-acre lot recently to let.

Want of capital and want of housing accommodation appear to be the reasons why the *bona fide* working man cannot make use of this chance of acquiring land for the purposes of market-gardening, an occupation which the men on the Sandy side of the district have all been brought up to. Many of the men, if not all, who hire the lots above mentioned bicycle out from Sandy to work their land, and could no doubt derive much more benefit from it if housing accommodation could be had on the place itself. The land can be rented much cheaper here than immediately round Sandy. In Sandy itself £8 an acre rent is paid, and £4 and £5 just outside. This land has been under market-garden-

ing for a very great number of years, and is in a high state of cultivation. The land at Willington is naturally not so good, but seems well adapted for the same type of working.

As regards communication, the land is situated on either side of a good high road running from Sandy to Bedford, and there is a station at Willington itself, on the London and North-Western Railway.

The present result of the purchase of this estate for resale is that there are now about 120 men employed where formerly there were seven or eight. It is not an uncommon sight to see as many as twenty-five people in one field. Last year seventy were counted in one field getting potatoes. Land that was formerly letting at from 11s. to 17s. an acre is now letting at from £1 10s. to £3. The cottages in the village which were originally let at from 10d. to 1s. 6d. a week, landlord paying rates, now let at 3s., the tenant paying rates.

Where 13s. to 15s. a week was being earned at farm work, the wages now received by garden labourers are from 25s. to 30s. a week.

One man interviewed had 23 acres under market-garden cultivation. He kept a lorry and horse, and carted supplies to greengrocers in Bedford. He was of opinion that this was the best thing for the small men to do, as otherwise they could not compete with the large local men who have their own salesmen in towns, and who buy largely off their smaller neighbours. He complained of the

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competition of the farmer renting his land at 15s. who had turned from farming to market-gardening on a large scale. He said he could make a good living on 5 or 6 acres. In this case, unless he kept a horse for retail work, he would get the ploughing done. As it is he shares with another man for a horse to plough.

One of his fields was in oats, grown for the horse; he had a small piece of grass land, and kept pigs and poultry; he had put up his own shedding. A 6-acre field near the house was cropped as follows:

Cabbage.	
Broccoli to come in in August, with turnips between to bunch in October.	
Scarlet runners.	Vegetable marrow, with parsley between. Will plant out cab- bage when marrows die.
Potatoes.	Onions. Cucumbers. Broccoli with radishes between. Cabbage seed bed.
	Brussels-sprouts, between which early potatoes had been dug up.

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Another man had 6 acres, on which he employed two men besides himself. His cropping was generally as follows :

Potatoes between sprouts—September to March.

↓  
Spring cabbage—April and May.

↓  
Carrots—June.

He considered that these crops were the most profitable, as they gave an equal succession of work and return throughout the different months of the year.

To sum up the points which are of interest in this locality as regards the whole small-holding question :

We have here a regular small-holding district—*i.e.*, the local rural population has been brought up in the methods of market-gardening on a small scale ; they all want land to carry on the only occupation they know. Financially, from one point of view, it is possible for men without capital to begin in a small way (if land could be had), because there is much job-work, and garden labourers can earn from 4s. to 5s. a day.

An estate has been bought to resell in small lots ; we find very few *bona fide* small men in a position to buy, but all eager to rent land.\* A certain number rent the unsold lots off the company, but are very much handicapped when the lots are purchased ; it often amounts to getting rid of their crops at a loss.

The best results seem to be obtained in cases



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where large lots have been bought by local men with capital, to relet in small lots. These purchasers know the best tenants, and get them; whereas the Land Company let or sell to anyone who appears to be able to pay at the moment.

If this estate had been acquired by the local authority at the same price for which it was bought by the Willington Land Company, there is no doubt that it could have been made of the greatest benefit to the district without undue risk; under the present conditions the men who could work it profitably are unable to take advantage of the fact that much of it is still in the market. The housing question is left in the hands of speculating builders, who have to pay very high prices for frontage and suitable building-sites; so that the men, to whom the fact of living on their holdings may mean the difference between success and failure, have to pay accordingly for their housing accommodation.

### A SMALL-HOLDING DEVELOPMENT NEAR BATH.

As an example of similar undertakings on a smaller scale, mention might be made of a syndicate which was formed at Bath in 1887 for the purpose of dealing with an estate which was then in the market.

This estate of 126 acres had been let as a farm at £1 an acre; two men had failed on it in succession. The only building included the farmhouse. It was bought up as a business speculation

by a syndicate of Bath tradesmen, and resold in lots to suit customers.

Nearly the whole of it was disposed of in the course of seven years in 120 lots ranging in size from a few perches to 12 acres.

#### PRICE.

The farm was bought for £4,332 ; roadways were set out, small waterworks constructed, and some fences erected. The price paid by the subsequent purchasers averaged £80 an acre. This included free conveyance of land. If desired, payment was allowed by quarterly instalments over periods up to ten years. The profits made enabled the company to pay dividends of 6 per cent. to the shareholders.

#### CHARACTER OF PURCHASERS.

The lots were all taken up by artisans and work-people living in Bath. In most cases they bought a plot on which to build a house and have enough garden to supply themselves with vegetables. There are now about eighty houses on the place, and more are being erected. Many of the plots were bought in the first instance as building-sites, the owners putting up houses and letting them.

Whereas many of the holders sell their surplus garden stuff, there are not many people using their holdings for a living. There are a certain number of market-gardeners earning a partial living on the land, but I only found one man who could be said to be living out of it altogether.

## A SUCCESSFUL SMALL HOLDER 177

The soil is very poor and stony, and lies on inferior oolite stone, which drains away all moisture ; the place is also very much exposed to east winds, so that for ordinary market-gardening purposes it is not very well adapted, in spite of the proximity of Bath as a market.

### A SUCCESSFUL SMALL HOLDER.

What can be done by an enterprising man with a knowledge of his business is well illustrated by the one man, formerly a gardener, who is making a living entirely on 2 acres.

While still living in Bath, where he kept a lodging-house, he started with  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre, for which he paid £40, and grew tomatoes. In a short time the profits enabled him to build a house on the place, and he gave up his other occupation.

He now has six large glass-houses, in which he grows in succession Marguerite daisies, tomatoes, and chrysanthemums. He employs two men regularly, besides odd labour at busy times.

The Marguerite daisies are sold in pots at prices ranging from 10s. to 2s. 6d. a dozen. A large number are sent to Dublin and Birmingham. He disposed of about 10,000 last year.

The tomatoes, amounting to 5 or 6 tons yearly, are mostly sold in Bath.

The poverty of the soil is so great that the potting earth for the chrysanthemums is made by mixing soil and manure half and half.

He buys a large amount of manure by contract from the Midland Railway.

He was anxious to enlarge his business, but it was almost impossible to get more land. The selling value had now risen to £150 an acre.

The land lies on a hill on the healthy side of Bath, and the town is rapidly spreading in that direction. No doubt in course of time the whole place will be built over ; in fact, many people are only cultivating their plots as market - gardens until they can realize on their sale as building-sites.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CREATION OF SMALL HOLDINGS THROUGH THE PURCHASE AND RE- SALE OF LAND BY INDIVIDUALS

WE have so far considered the creation of small holdings on the theoretical lines of idealists and the commercial lines of speculators; we have also studied the results of undertakings where a combination of the two principles was attempted with no very striking results. If our investigations were to stop at this point, we should not have received any very great encouragement towards a belief in the possibility of extending a system of small cultivating ownership in England amongst the agricultural class. There have, however, been successful cases of private enterprise in this direction, where individuals have attempted to supply small holdings to the *bona fide* rural labourer by the purchase of estates and resale in small lots. In this chapter I propose to deal with three instances of this kind—viz., at Winterslow, in Wiltshire; at Rew, in Dorset; and at Twyford, in Leicestershire.

## SMALL HOLDINGS AT WINTERSLOW, SALISBURY.

The small holdings at Winterslow are situated on what was originally known as Cooper's Farm. The farm was bought by Major Poore in 1892, and sold out in lots varying from  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre to 16 acres.

## LOCAL CONDITIONS.

Winterslow is about six miles to the east of Salisbury, off the main road. The nearest station is Dean, four miles away, on the London and South-Western Railway. The market-town is Salisbury, but a considerable amount of produce seems now to be sent to the new camps at Bulford and Tedworth, some ten miles distant. The population in 1891 was 786, which showed a large decrease on the previous census. The last census indicated a rise of 44. This was particularly noticeable, as being the only rise in any village round Salisbury. In every other village the population had decreased.

The farms in the immediate neighbourhood are large. There is a general complaint that many of them are not cultivated as they might be, and do not employ as much labour as they should. The inhabitants of Winterslow seek work on the farms in summer at such distances that they have to get lodgings away from their homes. It seems almost as if Winterslow now provided housing accommodation for the district round, many men working away all the week and returning home for Sundays only.

## AGRICULTURE OF THE DISTRICT.

The district was essentially one of corn-growing and sheep-breeding, but dairying is now getting a much stronger hold, and many of the large farms send milk to London, Portsmouth, and Southampton.

The fact that several successful farmers in the immediate neighbourhood are men who have worked their own way up—in some cases having started life in other trades—points to possibilities in the way of agriculture.

## PRICE OF LAND, RENT.

The average rental for the district is about 10s. an acre, the hill farms running as low as 5s. ; where there are water meadows and pasture it is higher.

The price of agricultural land averages about £10 an acre.

## OTHER TRADES.

A large number of the inhabitants find regular winter occupation in the working up of hazel and ash underwood into sheep-cribs and hurdles, which is a regular industry of the neighbourhood. The wood is put up to auction in lots. The cutting of it and making the smaller stuff into faggots employs a number of men beside those actually engaged in the manufacture of the cribs and hurdles, which are sent to all parts of the country. Besides this there are one or two families who are truffle-hunters.

## WAGES.

During the summer the men go out to work on the farms at some distance all round. In harvest-time they get an average of 4s. a day. For piece-work the payment per acre is as follows: Hoeing, 4s. 6d. to 5s.; mowing, 3s. 6d. to 5s.; tying, 4s. to 7s.; pulling roots, 6s. 6d. to 7s.

The ordinary wage for an agricultural labourer working regularly for a farmer is from 10s. to 12s., with additional harvest-money. Stockmen and carters get from 12s. to 14s., with cottage, potato ground, and extra money at Michaelmas.

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF COOPER'S FARM.

Cooper's Farm originally employed three men. The land is eminently suitable as regards its situation for the purpose of small holdings. It extends along the road which connects the scattered portions of Winterslow, known as East, West, and Mid Winterslow, and Winterslow Common, and comes up to the very back of some of the existing houses, making it very convenient for allotments.

The soil varies on different parts of the farm, approximating to a chalky loam. The land was very much exhausted when taken over, and has been greatly improved by cultivation. All the holders keep pigs for the purpose of supplying manure, and originally bought large quantities of horse and farmyard manure in addition.

The area of the farm was 195 acres. Eighty-



three were resold at once, and the remaining 112 were divided into plots varying from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 16 acres.

The cost of the whole farm was £1,500, and the 83 acres were sold at an improved price. The different plots were then valued on a basis of £15 an acre, the actual valuation varying from £8 to £30.

## TERMS OF SALE.

A scale of payment was adopted to enable the purchasers to spread their payment equally over a term of fifteen years. The following table explains the process of repaying £10 with interest :

Year.	Amount of Principal and Interest Paid.			Interest.			Principal Repaid.			Balance of Principal Due.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
End of year 1 ...	1	0	0	0	10	0	0	10	0	9	10	0
„ 2 ...	1	0	0	0	9	6	0	10	6	8	19	6
„ 3 ...	1	0	0	0	8	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	0	11	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	8	8	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
„ 4 ...	1	0	0	0	8	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	0	11	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	7	16	10
„ 5 ...	1	0	0	0	7	10	0	12	2	7	4	8
„ 6 ...	1	0	0	0	7	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	0	12	9 $\frac{1}{2}$	6	10	10 $\frac{1}{2}$
„ 7 ...	1	0	0	0	6	7	0	13	5	5	18	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
„ 8 ...	1	0	0	0	5	11	0	14	1	5	4	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
„ 9 ...	1	0	0	0	5	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	0	14	9 $\frac{1}{2}$	4	9	7
„ 10 ...	1	0	0	0	4	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	0	15	6 $\frac{1}{2}$	3	14	0 $\frac{1}{2}$
„ 11 ...	1	0	0	0	3	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	0	16	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	2	17	9
„ 12 ...	1	0	0	0	2	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	0	17	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	2	0	7 $\frac{1}{2}$
„ 13 ...	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	18	0	1	2	7 $\frac{1}{2}$
„ 14 ...	1	0	0	0	1	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	0	18	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	0	3	9
„ 15 ...	0	3	11	0	0	2	0	3	9	—		
	14	3	11	4	3	11	10	0	0	—		

A fixed payment of £1 for fourteen years, with 3s. 11d. in the fifteenth year, pays off £10; £2 would pay off £20, and so on.

If a man borrowed £10 at 3 per cent., each year he would pay 6s., and in nineteen years would have

paid £9 9s. The payments were to be made in half-yearly instalments, payable in advance.

Nine men paid for their plots outright, and eighteen had paid off by 1905.

#### FORMATION OF LANDHOLDERS' COURT.

In connection with this small-holdings scheme, Major Poore has established what he calls a Landholders' Court, with the view of 'giving the small holder a full responsibility and a direct and sole interest in the land he holds, and at the same time of setting up a common or mutual interest, which, while conserving the personal interest, shall build up an insurance by teaching the judicial method of bringing every mind in unison for common benefit.'

It was originally registered as a limited liability company, with nominal shares, and every purchaser of a lot was entitled to one share of 5s. ; but it was found more convenient to change it to a company limited by guarantee. The executive work of the court is the collection of rates, tithes, and rents, the land being rated as a whole as belonging to the Court.

The holdings are not actually conveyed to the purchasers, but let to them on a lease of 999 years. By this means, as the Court holds the lease, legal expenses are very much reduced in the transfer of land in case of resale.

There remains, after all the land has been paid for, a surplus fund, which amounts to about £1,050 over and above the original cost and expenses con-

nected with the sale. This Major Poore has made over to the Land Court, only retaining, with three other directors, the right of veto as to its disposal.

The fund is the common property of the Land Court, and can be applied to any purpose for the mutual benefit of the members. So far it has been used for advancing working capital at 3 per cent. to any member who, on applying for it, can, in the judgment of the Court, place proper security. Several of the holders borrowed from it for the purpose of building their houses.

The holders are divided into five sections. Each section has a chairman and vice-chairman appointed annually from their number in turn; the chairmen and vice-chairmen form the committee of the Court.

In organizing the Court in this way, Major Poore was trying to give effect to his principle that representative government can only be arrived at properly when those who are elected to public bodies are in a position to confer with their constituents through properly organized local committees. He himself, as County Councillor, had divided the villages of his district up into groups of ten families; every group appointed its chairman and vice-chairman, who formed collectively the village committee. He would confer with this body on any matter of importance concerning the district, or which was under the consideration of the County Council, and in this way got a real knowledge of local requirements.

I attended the twelfth annual meeting of the Land Court, and was much struck by the business-like way in which all members took a part in the proceedings, and the intelligent interest displayed on all points.

#### CHARACTER OF THE PURCHASERS.

Of the forty-nine holders, two alone have given up their holdings, which were only bought in the first instance as a speculation. One or two holdings are sublet, being merely held by the owners as a means of belonging to the Land Court. Of the remainder, 15 are held by woodmen. Amongst the others are 5 bakers and grocers, 1 blacksmith, 1 shopkeeper, 1 shoemaker, 1 builder, 1 postmaster, 1 postman, 1 market-gardener, 1 coal merchant, 1 carrier, 2 farmers, 2 men working on neighbouring estates, 2 agricultural labourers, 1 hay-trusser, 1 naval pensioner, and 1 retired soldier. They are all local people.

#### GENERAL CHARACTER OF HOLDINGS.

The very small plots have been used as building-sites with a garden. The majority of the holdings are of 1 acre, and on most of these a house has been erected. The land is used for growing potatoes and vegetables, and sometimes corn; in nearly all cases pigs and poultry are kept largely for the purpose of supplying manure. Several holders have become carriers, and collect the produce of their neighbours for Salisbury market or

the Bulford and Tedworth camps. These men with horses also plough their neighbours' ground. I only found two men who hand-dug their acre; the others got theirs ploughed, and grew corn on a large part of it. In many cases they seemed to think that the cost of threshing small quantities of corn (from 10d. to 2s. a sack) took away from the profit, and that it would be better to buy a little straw for litter and grow green-stuff and roots; and when they were at other employment they could not spare the time to dig all the ground. The largest holding is 16 acres, and is used by the owner in connection with a small farm at a little distance.

The average size of the larger holdings is from 5 to 7 acres, and they are cultivated according to the owner's calling. The men, such as the carriers, coal dealers, builders, and bakers, who have horses, grow corn and hay, and have a bit of pasture. Not many keep stock besides pigs and poultry; but there are a few with one or two milking cows and heifers, who rear calves and make butter, or sell milk in the village.

I only found one instance of a man who appeared to live altogether on his holding. On about 6 acres he kept three cows, two heifers, a young horse, pigs, and poultry. He reared heifers, and sold them with a calf, and made butter. He occasionally bought hay, otherwise he grew all the food for his stock on the land, and believed that the secret of success was to consume everything he grew on the

land. He had borrowed money from the Land Court to build his house, and while paying it off, and the purchase-money for the holding, he had got outside work to do, and his wife had taken in washing. He had no children at home.

Amongst the men who held 1 acre and went in more for market-gardening there was one man only who had no regular trade ; but he supplemented the income he derived from his holding by going out to work in the summer. On his acre he calculated he made an annual profit of £20 from his garden, and from £6 to £8 both on his pigs and his poultry. He kept four Berkshire pigs, buying them at 15s. to £1, and selling them after six months at from 7s. to 9s. a score.

He kept thirty Leghorns, and went in for egg-production solely, selling off the hens at two years old. He knew each fowl individually, and so could save the eggs for sitting from good layers only. His fowl-run was divided into two parts ; every year he grew a green crop on one half, and as soon as the crop was cleared moved the fowl on to it, and grew a crop on the half they had just left. In this way, as he pointed out, the fowl did not rob any of the land that he could use for garden purposes. He dug all his land and tried to get all work well forward in the winter, so as to be free to work outside in summer, and not have more to do than he could manage in the evenings. He was of opinion that a man must have outside work to live on a holding of that size, and that if he had

more land he would not be able to cultivate it without help or capital.

Two agricultural labourers held 1-acre plots, and had put up their own houses on borrowed money, which they paid off in instalments. Neither of them at present works regularly for a farmer, but do jobbing work; this leaves them free to put in a day's work on their holdings when necessary. They kept pigs and poultry, and grew large quantities of potatoes and green-stuff for home consumption, selling the surplus to the dealers who came round to collect produce. When they had not time to dig their plots they had part of them ploughed and grew corn. It seemed to be important that the holding for agricultural labourers in regular work should not be of a larger size than they could manage themselves in the evenings. For they could not arrange to work a larger holding profitably.

The general consensus of opinion was that as adjuncts the holdings were invaluable, but that no man could bring up a family on the holding alone. Working, as most of them did, at a regular winter trade, and at farm work in summer, the holdings were specially valuable in providing employment for the autumn and spring months, when they might otherwise have a difficulty in getting work.

#### HOUSES ERECTED BY HOLDERS.

Of the forty-nine holders, thirty-three had built houses; a Rechabite hall and a mission hall had

likewise been erected by them on the Land Court ground.

Some of the houses were of brick; by far the larger number were of the type peculiar to the district, built of a kind of concrete made of chalk and straw, with brick foundations and chimneys. They had been put up by two builders belonging to the Land Court at a cost of about £120. They consisted of two good sitting-rooms, the usual back premises, and three bedrooms.

#### METHODS OF CO-OPERATION.

There is a pig club for the village; the members are divided into groups of ten neighbours, and each member takes his turn in being head of his section. Each head is responsible to the secretary for payments and inspection of pigs in his section. When a pig dies the whole section meets and decides its value. When there is £50 in hand a bonus is divided.

The Court has invested in a potato-sprayer, which every member is entitled to use on payment of a small sum.

Nearly every member belongs to some form of benefit society.

#### SPINNING AND WEAVING INDUSTRY.

This industry was established some years ago by Mrs. Poore. An excellent homespun is manufactured from the wool of Hampshire Down sheep, and has won the gold medal at the Home Arts and



Industries Exhibition. The industry does not seem to flourish as it ought, partly from lack of working capital. The cloth being rather expensive, not much is kept in stock, as the workers cannot be paid till the stuff is sold; and as the industry is not advertised, they are dependent on private orders.

#### GENERAL IMPRESSIONS.

The whole place impressed one most favourably. The holdings were, for the most part, tidy and well cultivated, and the people seemed singularly prosperous and contented. The undertaking has evidently been the means of enabling a thrifty and hard-working population to benefit by their own self-help, and has established a colony of deserving people securely on the soil. In several cases it has been the means of bringing back men to the land who had left their native place and gone in for other trades. It has also raised the level of the cottages on neighbouring estates, as the people refuse to live in the tumble-down cottages which they would otherwise have been compelled to put up with.

#### CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS.

The undoubted success of the undertaking I attribute to the following causes:

First, what might be called the preliminary favouring conditions—

1. That there already existed a number of small

freeholders, descended from original 'squatters,' on Winterslow Common.

2. That since the time of the squatters there have been various facilities for acquiring small pieces of land, due to the sale of estates belonging to smaller landowners, which has increased the number of freeholders.

3. That the qualities which one often finds accompanying any race of freeholders, a certain inherited independence, thrift, and enterprise, were fostered by the absence of any large resident landlord in the neighbourhood (making the people entirely dependent on their own resources), and strengthened by the organizing work done by Major Poore in his capacity as County Councillor, with a view of inculcating ideas of individual responsibility and common interest.

The ground being thus, so to speak, prepared, and the people not only clamouring for land, but being in a position to profit by the acquisition of it, the ultimate success of the scheme was secured by the following favourable circumstances:

4. The eminently convenient situation of the farm, extending between the scattered parts of the village; and, above all—

5. The existence of the winter trade in the woods, finding employment for at least one-third of the holders.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.

We may infer from the results of this experiment that it is not favourable agricultural conditions alone which determine the success of small holdings. Here we have a most flourishing colony in spite of the fact that it is far from main roads, stations, and markets, and not on particularly good land.

It seems rather to suggest that small holdings would be a special boon when established in connection with any local industry, and this not only as a means of keeping the men employed in it on the land: for it appears indirectly to solve one of the vexed questions of agricultural labour—viz., the supply of extra hands at busy times. Here we have a constant supply of men available for harvest and hoeing who, if they were solely dependent on agricultural labour, would be inevitably thrown out of employment during the winter. This, in time, leads to the forsaking of agriculture as a calling, and to farmers being handicapped by lack of labour.

## SMALL HOLDINGS ON REW FARM, DORSET.

Rew Farm is in the parish of Martinstown, three miles from Dorchester. It was purchased by Sir Rôbert Edgcumbe in 1888, and sold out in thirty freehold lots ranging from 1 to 31 acres.

GENERAL AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS  
OF THE DISTRICT.

The hill farms were large, averaging about 500 acres, and were chiefly barley and sheep before the times of agricultural depression. There is a general complaint now that the larger farms cannot be profitably farmed owing to the want of capital; hence there is a tendency to reduce the size of holdings, 500 acres being cut into 200 and 300 acre farms. Smaller men work them themselves, seed down, and employ less labour; hence a great decrease in the number of sheep kept. There is a general opinion that there is less produce as well as less labour on the farms that have been cut up.

Hence the demand for agricultural labour does not seem to exceed the supply in the neighbourhood.

The larger farms let at an average of 10s., rising to £1 for the smaller ones in more convenient situations and for dairy farms.

The average weekly wage is from 10s. to 12s. In some cases a cottage, fuel, and extra harvest money is in addition to this. Carters and stockmen get 1s. or 2s. a week more.

Dorchester, Abbotsbury, Weymouth, and Portland are all within possible distances on good roads. The presence of the fleet at Weymouth doubles the population of that town periodically, and the influx of visitors during the summer creates a large

demand for market-gardening produce and poultry, and makes an eminently suitable market for small holders.

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF REW FARM.

Rew farm is on the outskirts of the village of Martinstown (Winterbourne St. Martin). It is a narrow strip nearly two miles long, running right across a valley and up the hill on either side. Its north end abuts on the high road leading from Dorchester to Bridport; it is crossed in the valley by the road from Martinstown to Bridport, and near the southern end by the road to Abbotsbury. A road nearly a mile long has been constructed by Sir R. Edgcumbe from the north to the south through the middle of the farm; the chalk, gravel, and flint used in its construction all came off the farm, the total cost being £340.

The farm lies on the Upper Cretaceous formation. The soil varies considerably; at the north end there is a strong yellow clay on the chalk, which gives place nearer the valley to a richer, almost loamy, soil. It is lighter and poorer at the south end, without much depth before getting on the chalk.

The original area of the farm was 343 acres. After deducting 9 acres for roads, 25 acres of water meadow and copse, and 2 acres with the farmhouse, which were sold outright, there remained about 305 acres and four cottages for small holdings.

## PURCHASE OF HOLDINGS.

The price at the auction was £5,050; tillages and tenant right came to £490; road-making to £340; £120 was spent on wells, £129 on survey and valuation of plots, and £11 on law costs; the total amounting to £6,140, or about £18 per acre.

The land was taken up by twenty-seven purchasers. A few acres of the best, facing south and nearer the village, fetched £36 per acre. About two-thirds averaged £12 to £15 per acre, the lowest price being £7. The remaining third averaged from £20 to £22.

One-tenth of the purchase-money was paid down; the remaining nine-tenths was to be paid by half-yearly instalments spread over nine years,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. interest being charged on outstanding purchase-money, and paid half-yearly. Many plots were paid for outright, and at the end of the nine years all the money had been paid off.

Sir Robert Edgcumbe draws especial attention to the fact that there was as keen a demand for the poorer land in an inconvenient situation as there was for the better portions, the price, of course, being correspondingly lower. This is to be noted, for the general idea amongst land agents is that if a farm is sliced up, the worst land will be left on the owner's hands; in many cases this apprehension has been sufficient to deter a landlord who has been otherwise anxious to dispose of a farm in this way. Sir Robert Edgcumbe points out that the know-

## DESCRIPTION OF PURCHASERS 197

ledge of land agents, valuers, and surveyors, ignorant often, of the state of the case as regards smaller men, is based on their experience in connection with tenant farmers. The farmer has two heavy preferential payments which he *must* meet—*i.e.*, the labour bill and rent; it is possible for him in a bad season to be a heavy loser. The small man, who has paid for his land, has *no* preferential charges, so that *any* crop is to him a source of profit, and poor land is not valueless to him in the same way as it would be to the farmer who has large outgoings on it.

### ORIGINAL OCCUPATION OF PURCHASERS.

The majority of the holders were not originally employed solely in agriculture.

In Sir R. Edgcumbe's report, published by Mr. Rider Haggard in 'Rural England,' he gives the list of professions as follows: 8 agricultural labourers, 3 gardeners, 2 coachmen, 2 stonemasons, 2 watchmakers, 1 carpenter, 1 shopkeeper, 1 policeman, 1 blacksmith, 1 cooper, 1 carman, 1 postman, 1 porter, and 1 general dealer.

On inquiring into the history of the eight agricultural labourers, I gathered that the majority of them, while occasionally engaged in farm work, had been small hawkers and general dealers, and the acquisition of holdings had formed a foundation for the pursuit of the same trade on a larger scale. Some of them had formerly rented small bits of land.

Of the other holders originally employed in

different trades, there were not many who had not had some connection with work on the land.

#### PRESENT CONDITIONS OF HOLDINGS.

Of the original purchasers, three have died, and their holdings have been purchased at enhanced prices by their prospering neighbours.

Five holdings are used as adjuncts to their owners' trades, and are not lived on by them. Of these, one is used as a bee-farm by a shopkeeper in Dorchester. On another the owner, originally a carpenter, and now a coal merchant and haulier, grows fodder for his horses ; three general dealers in Abbotsbury use 30 acres on which to run young cattle and grow hay.

Those actually living on their holdings are, with some exceptions, general dealers and hawkers ; they each have a horse and cart, and supplement their own vegetables, butter, fowl and eggs by buying in the markets and hawking their goods to private customers. Where the holdings are of 5 or 6 acres they grow chiefly vegetables and keep for the horse, and go in largely for poultry.

On the larger holdings of 20 or 30 acres the general rule is to find two-thirds laid down to pasture, the remaining third producing roots and corn, which is mostly consumed on the land by the stock.



## INDIVIDUAL CASES.

On one holding of 30 acres—half pasture, half arable—there were thirty sheep, seven cows, two horses, pigs and poultry. The milk was made into butter during the spring and summer; calves were reared on the winter-calving cows, which were sold off when fat, and replaced by others bought in the market.

A son and daughter worked on the farm. The wife and daughter did the dealing part of the business, leaving the men free to work on the land. The holder originally rented land, and was a general dealer in butter, fowls and eggs. He occupies one of the original cottages of the farm.

On another holding of 30 acres, 25 acres had been laid down to grass by degrees, and on the 5 acres of arable I saw a good crop of roots and cabbages. There were fifty-two sheep (including lambs), three cows, a horse and poultry. They had also two heifers out at grass on the adjacent down land, for which they paid a neighbouring farmer 1s. 6d. a week. They used both artificial manure and cake. The place was worked by the man, his wife and a nephew. They had a mowing-machine, and cut hay for the other holders. The land had been some of the cheapest, owing to its inconvenient situation, and it had been uphill work to get it to its present pitch of production, but it now gives a much greater return than formerly.

Amongst those living on their holdings who were

not general dealers, the most successful appeared to be a market-gardener, who held 17 acres, and has since bought up two of the other holdings. He had been a private gardener on a large place, and evidently knew his business well. He had some of the best land with a south aspect, and with the help of one other man had erected a large number of rough glass-houses, as well as a small wooden dwelling-house. He had a shop in Dorchester, kept by his wife and daughter, which he supplied with vegetables and flowers. He had also some heifers running out on a small piece of pasture, and kept pigs and poultry, besides two horses and a pony, which he used for pumping water and carting his produce to Dorchester. He provides a large part of another holder's income by employing him to haul coal and stable manure from Dorchester. He found the competition of the Channel Islands severe, as they could get earlier on the market, but he seemed to be making a good thing out of tomatoes. He appeared to be the one obviously flourishing man on the place, and would probably do well anywhere; I might add that he was the only man I could find who depended entirely on his holding for a living, and it must be remembered that he ran a shop in connection with it.\*

Another man living in the village held about 18 acres, and had some exceedingly fine-looking

\* I am informed that this man has now sold his land and gone.

milking-cows and young stock. He sold milk in Martinstown, and the general appearance of his holding seemed to indicate prosperity. He had other small sources of income.

On another holding of 17 acres was a lime-kiln. The owner, besides working the kiln, was a haulier. He had a boy at home, and employed labour to get out the chalk. He had built a substantial flint and chalk house with three good rooms downstairs and five bedrooms, and was about to build two more houses on his holding. By getting the chalk and flints and sand off his own land and employing a jobbing mason, he calculated he could build a pair of cottages for £150. They would consist of two good rooms downstairs with a lean-to back-kitchen and out-house and three bedrooms upstairs.

#### HOUSES ERECTED BY HOLDERS.

Of the fifteen dwellings I saw, four were cottages originally on the farm; two were good-sized brick houses not occupied by the owners (and rented, as I gather, at a loss); a few were of the chalk and flint construction common in the neighbourhood, and of these only two were two-storied. The remainder of the houses were exceedingly rough wooden shanties built by the people themselves, all of one story, and many of them with only two rooms. The general opinion seemed to be that those who had put their money into their houses had 'done for themselves.' The pigsties, fowl-

houses, etc., were also very roughly constructed with odd bits of material. One man's shed I noticed was roofed over mainly with old tins and bits of carpet.

#### GENERAL IMPRESSIONS.

Taking Rew as a whole, I cannot say that I was impressed with any general air of extreme prosperity. The place gave one a feeling of desperate struggle, hard work, and poverty. But there was a spirit of independence in the people and happiness in working for themselves which seemed to compensate for everything. The pervading tone was one of delight at being their own masters, even if they had to work harder for it. With the exception of a few cases the place is practically a colony of small dealers, each owning their cart and horse and hawking their goods about Dorchester, Weymouth, Portland, and Abbotsbury, besides doing carrier work. They work harder and for longer hours than the ordinary agricultural labourer, and are certainly, taken as a whole, worse housed.

#### SUMMARY.

The general agricultural conditions of the neighbourhood are not in any way encouraging. Wages are low, and the demand for labour does not exceed the supply. The soil is not particularly good, and there are no special facilities for the production of any particular crop.

The farm is, however, conveniently situated near

a village, with good roads leading to several markets, of which two are exceptionally suitable for the usual produce of small holdings; but they are all at some distance. The original price was low, and facilities were given for extending payment over a number of years.

The holders, although most of them had not been originally engaged in agriculture, were all local people, and with few exceptions, had had some connection with the land.

The holdings are mostly agricultural, and owned by small dealers and carriers, who hawk their own produce to private customers along with stuff bought up in market. There is not a single case of a man who is *entirely* dependent on his holding for a living, the nearest approximation to it being a market-gardener, who runs a shop in connection with his holding.

Of those who are not dealers, one is a coal merchant and haulier, one a milk-seller with other sources of income, one a carrier and jobmaster, one a haulier, and one a market-gardener. In the three cases which have occurred of death, the holding has been bought up by a neighbour.

While the people work harder and for longer hours than the ordinary agricultural labourer, and are for the most part worse housed, they seem to think they are better off, and express great satisfaction with their independence.

## CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS.

I ascribe their degree of success to the facts:

1. That they are situated on good roads within reasonable distance of *several* large markets.

2. That the majority of them already possessed as hawkers a private market for their goods on coming into their holdings. They were secure as regards the disposal of their produce, and were able to increase their business by degrees.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.

1. If the small holder is to find the purchase-money for his land, as well as make a living out of it, he must (unless working on a scale requiring capital, or as a market-gardener under exceptional conditions) have some other source of income connected with, or as an adjunct to, his work on the land; and the possibilities of this should be considered in endeavouring to establish small holdings.

2. That a system of co-operation would probably make the difference between a qualified and a great success. If the disposal of their produce was carried out on an organized system, they would secure better prices by not, as it were, cutting one another's throats, and would not lose time by each spending whole days twice a week in carting their separate goods to distant markets.

The undertaking is undoubtedly a considerable success. The farm which originally found employment for three men and one boy, and with the

farmer might be regarded as supporting twenty-one persons, is now supporting a population of nearly ninety. If this much can be carried out on what was indifferent land by people of a decidedly poor class, who have had no assistance in the way of working capital, and with no very great facilities as to production and disposal of their produce, it seems to suggest great possibilities where such schemes are carried out on more organized lines and in more favourable circumstances.

#### SMALL HOLDINGS AT TWYFORD, LEICESTERSHIRE.

This scheme was carried out by a Member of Parliament who wished to encourage small holdings in the district.

In 1893,  $25\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land were bought at the rate of £30 an acre, and resold in twenty-two lots. The land lies one mile from the village of Twyford (population, 400), on the road leading to Ashley Folville.

The nearest market town is Melton Mowbray, at a distance of seven miles.

The stations are John O'Gaunt (one mile), and Great Dalby (one and a half miles).

#### AGRICULTURE OF THE DISTRICT.

The district is almost entirely pasture, with some good feeding land, but the actual site of the small holdings is rather poor.

There are some large farms; the bulk of them are from 100 to 200 acres, and are given up to grazing and dairy-farming. On the latter type Stilton cheese is made.

The rent of the larger farms averages about 25s. an acre, and the smaller ones go up to £2.

#### PRICE PAID FOR SMALL HOLDINGS.

The price paid for the lots was the original £30 an acre, plus 4 per cent. interest for ten years on the unpaid capital, which works out at £37 10s. per acre. The annual payment for the ten years was £3 15s. per acre, at the end of which time the lot became the freehold of the purchaser.

#### SOME CONDITIONS OF SALE.

No power was given the buyers, until they became owners of the freehold, to let or mortgage their holdings without consent.

They could erect buildings or houses on the land provided they were not for the sale of intoxicating liquors.

Applicants for land were restricted to *bona fide* agricultural labourers, tenant farmers of the village, shopkeepers or tradesmen born or resident for two years within a radius of three miles.

Each holder was restricted to 3 acres.

#### CHARACTER OF PURCHASERS.

Of the 22 purchasers, 11 were agricultural labourers, 5 were tradesmen and shopkeepers, and 6 were tenant farmers.



## PRESENT CONDITION OF HOLDINGS.

At the present time (1905) the number of holders has fallen to twelve, and the clause limiting each holder to 3 acres has not been enforced. Of the eleven agricultural labourers, there are now only two left. Two had bettered themselves, and left to start farming. The rest had either left the neighbourhood, or did not care to go on with the holdings after a few years. The lots, as they fell in, had mostly been taken up by tenant farmers. These men as a rule seeded the land down for mowing. The remaining plots were cultivated in the ordinary way for corn and roots.

No special crops were grown, and no one had gone in for the market-garden type of cultivation.

## INDIVIDUAL CASES.

One of the remaining labourers, holding 1 acre, worked for a neighbouring farmer at 18s. a week, with extra harvest money. He had a family of five small children.

He had dug all his holding by hand, and had half the land in wheat and in potatoes alternately. He recommended this system to small holders working for regular wages, as it gave least work. The potatoes cleaned the land for wheat, and once the grain was sown in the autumn the work was done till next autumn, save for an occasional weeding. He kept pigs at home, which supplied him with manure, and sold whatever stuff he did

not want for his own consumption. He calculated he made £8 a year out of his acre to pay for his own labour.

He considered the land had already paid for itself, and was of opinion that this system of acquiring land, with facilities for paying the purchase-money by easy instalments, was of the greatest assistance to an agricultural labourer ; and that, though it would not be possible for a man to save on his wages while bringing up a family sufficiently to pay a lump sum down, he saw no reason why an agricultural labourer would not be able to do it in this way.

#### REASONS WHY THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER DID NOT TAKE IT UP.

The local opinion as to why it was not more taken up by labourers, though it may seem trivial, is worth considering as an illustration of the elementary facts that have to be dealt with in an unenlightened neighbourhood. The chief fault seemed to be the ignorance and suspicion of the labourers. Many of them declared that at the end of the ten years it would somehow be proved that the land was not theirs at all, and that they were somehow being 'done.' This attitude of mind was attributed to want of education, and to bad treatment by the farmers. Many were also afraid that the possession of a piece of land would prevent them from getting parish relief ; in that case, being obliged to sell, they would probably have to do so

at a loss. Others made no secret of the fact that they could not be bothered with holdings at such a distance after a day's work.

It is noticeable, however, that many of them hold parish allotments nearer the village, where they pay £4 an acre rent, with no prospect of ever becoming owners of the land.

#### GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.

Looked at from one point of view, the undertaking does not seem to be an eminent success. It must be admitted that the land in the long run has not got into the hands of those whom it was primarily intended to benefit, and the twenty-two lots have now been absorbed into twelve.

But it must be remembered that there were none of the conditions which experience in other places shows are necessary factors to success.

1. There was no particular demand for land amongst the labourers.

2. There was no natural opening for any particular cultivation suitable for small holdings in the market-garden line.

3. The soil not being particularly good, it would require rather a large acreage for a holding sufficient for a man to maintain a family, and there were not many such in the neighbourhood, for which these smaller lots could have been looked upon as stepping-stones.

4. It was quite a new thing in the district, and therefore people looked askance at it.

That it has, however, been a step in the right direction is obvious from the fact that some of the labourers seem now to regret having lost their chance, and if another opportunity were offered, it would probably meet with greater success.

The fact that all the twelve holders have received their title-deeds, and are now actual owners of the land, has been a great object-lesson.

#### COMPARISON OF REW, WINTERSLOW, AND TWYFORD.

##### THE NECESSITY OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE.

In comparing the nature of these three undertakings and their respective results, one point comes out very clearly. It will be remembered that in the first chapter much stress was laid on the necessity of local knowledge, and the reasons were given why any attempt to create small holdings would depend very much for its success on its being handled with due regard to local requirements. The experiment at Winterslow stands out conspicuously successful not only amongst the three considered in this chapter, but as being the one and only thoroughly successful attempt amongst all those which have aimed at creating ownership (if a 999 years' lease can be called ownership), as distinguished from any form of tenancy. A comparison of the conditions under which these colonies were established shows that in the case of Winterslow alone the scheme came as an answer to a well-

defined and established local demand of men who really knew what they were about, and were in a position to take immediate advantage of the opportunities offered them.

At Rew the land was merely sold outright to anyone who seemed able to buy; the purchasers, although mostly from the county of Dorset, were not so much a type of regular agriculturists drawn from the adjoining village as was the case at Winterslow, but were more of a heterogeneous collection with differing aims. Many of them found it a hard struggle to be at the same moment purchasing their holding, putting up their houses, and getting their land into cultivation at the same time that they were getting a living. Winterslow is a thriving village community with substantial houses, and the visitor is impressed with a general air of prosperity. Rew is a collection of struggling freeholders, with a tendency for the less prosperous to be bought out by their more successful neighbours; while some are doing fairly well and have put up good houses, the holdings of less capable men give one a feeling of a gipsy encampment. The scheme at Twyford, again, although on a very much smaller scale, serves to illustrate the point that only very little success can be expected in the first instance, when the experiment does not emanate naturally, as it were, from the desire of the people themselves who are to benefit by it, but is offered to them through an outsider's semi-philanthropic interest.

THE SYSTEM OF TENURE AS AFFECTING THE  
CO-OPERATIVE IDEA.

Another consideration suggested by these undertakings is that it is difficult, in schemes which merely aim at creating freeholds, not to incur the evils pertaining to the absence of all sense of communal interest. In a collection of holdings with something binding them together as a community it is easier to enforce rules or conditions for the good of the whole colony; moreover, when associated, the members have greater power than as individual units to control circumstances conducive to their own benefit. Major Poore realized this, and by his plan of creating a Land Court which holds the leases (and therefore retains the power of enforcing rules), and possesses a fund to be used for the common benefit, he has managed to establish to a certain degree a sense of community where the men are practically independent freeholders. This at least forms a basis on which any introduction of co-operative methods or association amongst the members for obtaining other benefits could rest. In the case of tenancies this feature is perhaps partially replaced by the landlord, whether a private individual or a body, who can insist on good cultivation, the destruction of harmful weeds, and a few other points necessary for the common welfare.

In a subsequent chapter it will be shown how the highest fulfilment of this communal interest is

possible in the case of co-operative and other associations which have sprung up spontaneously amongst the people themselves who want land ; by banding themselves together for this purpose they have not only been able to obtain land which would have been out of their reach as individuals, but have obtained it at a reasonable figure, and are able to conduct their holding subsequently under more favourable conditions.

It seems important, in an individualistic country like England, where co-operative methods are so hard to establish, that the working basis of any scheme—*i.e.*, the system of tenure—should be used as one of the most effective means of inducing a sense of communal interest from the very start. Special attention is drawn to this point in the present chapter, because of the excellent illustration afforded by the contrast of the two colonies, Rew and Winterslow.

## CHAPTER VI

### SMALL HOLDINGS ASSOCIATIONS ESTABLISHED THROUGH THE PRIVATE ENTERPRISE OF INDIVIDUALS

WE have now come to an end of those schemes whose real object, whether they succeeded in it or not, was the establishment of small proprietors on the land. It has been pointed out how the genuine agriculturist seldom made any use of the opportunities offered to him to acquire land. In those cases, dealt with in the last chapter, where he has done so, it has been largely owing to the personal element of a local resident or of some one connected in other ways with the district. Amongst the schemes undertaken by means of companies, the Small Farm and Labourers' Land Company alone offered the alternative of renting land, and we have much testimony to show that in every case this was eagerly taken up, and the demand for land to hire exceeded the supply. After realizing the somewhat qualified success of undertakings dealing with cultivating ownership, it is refreshing to turn to the results of another form of scheme where the object is the supply of land to the



demand that exists amongst the agricultural population to rent it.

These associations have all met with an unqualified success, both from a financial standpoint, and also as serving the ends satisfactorily for which they were called into existence. Their work has been amongst *bona fide* agriculturists in rural districts, and their aim has been to supply holdings on reasonable terms to suitable local men wanting land.

Mr. Winfrey's name is already well known in connection with the formation of the Lincolnshire Small Holdings Association, which rents its land from Lord Carrington in the fen districts of South Lincolnshire. The success of this undertaking inspired the formation of the Norfolk Small Holdings Association, which is run on much the same lines.

Of a slightly different character is an establishment of small holdings near Wing in Bucks, where, through the initiative of a local resident, a committee was formed for the purpose of renting some glebe land and subletting it to working men.

#### SMALL HOLDINGS OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE • SMALL HOLDINGS ASSOCIATION ON LORD CARRINGTON'S ESTATE AT SPALDING.

At the present time there are 202 tenants on 650 acres in the neighbourhood of Spalding, leased by the Lincolnshire Small Holdings Association from Lord Carrington.

## ORIGIN OF THE ASSOCIATION.

The formation of the Association was due to the efforts of Mr. Winfrey, Chairman of the Small Holdings Committee of the Holland County Council. He began in 1887 with the formation of allotment clubs, by means of which the labourers were taught to combine and make their wants known. The result of his work was that in nineteen parishes round Spalding the acreage under allotment cultivation has risen from 130 acres, in 1887, to over 3,200 acres. Demands for small holdings then began to come from the members of the Spalding Common Allotment Club, to meet which the County Council in 1894 bought a farm of 88 acres from Lord Carrington, which was let in 1 to 3 acre plots. This was quite insufficient to meet all the demands, and the County Council was not prepared to go any further. In 1895, therefore, on getting a chance to lease 250 acres of land from Lord Carrington, Mr. Winfrey formed a syndicate for this purpose, and sublet the land to the members of the Allotment Club.

## PROGRESS OF THE MOVEMENT.

As the demand for small holdings still continued, three other fields were acquired in course of time and cut up into 1 to 6 acre lots.

In 1902 another farm of 265 acres was offered on lease by Lord Carrington to the Association, and was cut up into 2 to 40 acre holdings.

## RENT, ETC.

The Association pays Lord Carrington's rent, and charges to the tenants a slightly higher rent to cover the cost of fencing, ditching, etc., and the expenses of management. The Association also pays the rates in the first instance, and recovers the same *pro rata* from their tenants at the subsequent rent audits.

## TERMS OF TENANCY, TENANT RIGHT, ETC.

The tenant agrees not to underlet his holding, or do anything injurious to an adjacent holding; 'to cultivate and manage the land according to the custom of the county'; and he 'is not to grow more than two white straw crops in succession.'

In the first instance the Association decided to undertake the work of trimming hedges, clearing out ditches, etc., and to charge the cost to the tenants. But the tenants preferred, as a rule, to do the work themselves, as it fills up time which they often could not usefully employ, and arrangements have now been made that they shall be responsible for it.

In the case of Cowbit House Farm, the tenant right was paid by the Association, who farmed the land until harvest, when it was divided up amongst the holders and let free of tenant right.

## LOCAL CONDITIONS.

Spalding is situated in the centre of the Fenland district, which has been called the 'garden of

Lincolnshire.' The two classes of Fen soil, the silt and the peat ('black soil'), are admirably adapted to market-gardening and the growing of special crops.

The larger farmers since the times of depression have turned their attention from ordinary farming to the growing of such crops as early potatoes, celery, peas, broad beans, turnips, and mustard for seed.

The men cultivating the land nearer the town go in largely for early potatoes, celery, peas, and bulbs (narcissi, daffodils, lilies, and crocuses).

The conditions are, therefore, particularly suitable for small holdings, and a very great number have developed naturally, of which a large percentage are freeholds. In Mr. Druce's report of 1880 he gives the number of holdings under 50 acres in Lincolnshire as 20,263 (out of a total of 26,542)—a larger number than is found in any other county except the West Riding of Yorkshire—and the major part of these are in South Lincolnshire. In addition to this, there has always been a greater demand for allotments than is found in other purely agricultural places.

The district furnishes a striking example of the value of allotments as the stepping-stone to small holdings.

#### MARKETS.

As South Lincolnshire is entirely agricultural, with no great mining or industrial population, there

is no good local market for the produce of small holders. The greater part of the produce is bought up by agents for the London, Sheffield, Manchester, and Birmingham markets, or consigned to the markets for sale on commission. There is a weekly market at Spalding.

#### PRICE OF LAND, ETC.

The average value of the land is about £50 per acre, varying from £25 to £90 per acre, and even more for 'accommodation' land in the near neighbourhood of market towns and villages. The rental value of the land varies from £1 per acre to £5 per acre, according to quality, proximity to a town or railway-station, suitability for fruit and potato cultivation, etc. A large area of grass land has of late years been ploughed up for market-gardening purposes.

#### WILLOW TREE FARM.

This farm is 217 acres in extent, of which 80 are pasture. It lies three miles from Spalding on a good high road.

#### HOUSING ACCOMMODATION.

The farm-house has been adapted to accommodate the two largest tenants, holding 40 and 35 acres respectively. The farm buildings are divided between them and a third man. There were originally no other buildings on the land, and the holders

lived in Spalding or between that town and the farm, many of them residing two and three miles distant. In 1906, however, six houses with buildings were built on the main road frontage by Lord Carrington through the Association. These houses are built in pairs, and cost £555 the pair; a further sum of £70 for the two spent on drainage, water-supply, and fencing brings the total cost up to £625, or £312 10s. per house. They are substantially built, with six rooms, besides a scullery and dairy. The Association pays Lord Carrington 5 per cent. on the outlay, which makes the rental about 6s. a week.

#### DIVISION OF THE LAND.

In the first instance the land was partitioned as follows: The 80 acres of grass were divided up with post and wire fencing into eighteen plots; ten of these were of  $10\frac{1}{2}$  acres, the rest of a size varying from 4 to 10 acres. The fencing was done by the syndicate, the cost being gradually recovered in the rent. The water question, which in so many cases is a difficulty, appears to be solved here by the dykes which run through the farm, the land being so fenced as to allow one end of each plot to terminate on the dyke. The arable land was staked out in 1, 2, and 3 acre lots; and, besides the two tenants occupying the farm-house, there are nine tenants renting from 4 to 10 acres each, including some pasture.

Since the building of the cottages just mentioned,

however, there has had to be a certain rearrangement of the plots, so as to put an additional acreage to the new holding. The ultimate intention of the Association is to provide from 20 to 25 acres to each cottage. At present, however, some of the incoming tenants do not require so much land to start with, and it has therefore been possible to accommodate all without any serious disturbance of the present tenants, many of whom have had to be transferred to other plots. As changes occur amongst the present holders, it will in course of time be feasible to create with the new cottages the type of self-contained holding on which a man has the best chance for success.

A set of buildings suitable for 40 acres of land have been provided for five of the holdings at a total cost of £450. These buildings are of creosoted wood and galvanized iron, and comprise a barn with a concrete floor, a loft for hay, an implement hovel, a stable for two horses, a shed for two cows, an enclosure for calves and pigs, a fenced crew with double doors, and a galvanized iron tank for water. These homesteads are built by the Association, but become the property of Lord Carrington at the end of eighteen years in the following manner. Lord Carrington allows off the rent payable to him by the Association an annual sum of £18 13s. 6d.—*i.e.*, a sum which, invested as a sinking fund, will in eighteen years produce the amount of the original outlay. The total sum payable by him will therefore be £336 3s. ; the balance on the total cost of

the buildings—*i.e.*, £113 17s.—will be written off at the rate of £6 6s. per annum.

As pointed out by Mr. Jonas, Lord Carrington's agent, in his evidence before the Small Holdings Committee, the extra payment on every holding of 40 acres due to buildings is therefore as follows :

	£	s.	d.
5 per cent. on the house costing £312 10s. ...	15	12	6
4 per cent. on the buildings costing £90 ...	3	12	0
Total ... ..	19	4	6
Deduct (for cottage already held elsewhere by the tenant) ... ..	7	16	0
Total increase due to buildings ...	11	8	6

This sum on 40 acres works out at about 5s. 9d. an acre to be added to the original rent of the land. Mr. Jonas takes 40 acres as the basis of this calculation. But, as a matter of fact, the holdings are more likely to be of 20 or 25 acres, in which case the rise of rent per acre is very considerable indeed. One is, of course, struck by the high price of the houses when considered from the purely utilitarian point of view of the small holder himself, and one is tempted to ask : would he not have been better off in a less pretentious house with a correspondingly reduced call on his weekly earnings ?

#### RENT.

The grass land is let at 35s. to 45s. an acre, and the arable at 33s., with the exception of one field adjoining the main road, which is let at 40s. Arrangements have now been made, however, to



raise the rent of the arable fields to £2, to enable the Association to meet the cost of the buildings.

#### TENANTS.

A comparatively small number of the tenants live entirely off their holdings; the majority are either farm-labourers, or are working tradesmen, carters, railway-men, etc. The largest occupier, holding 40 acres and occupying half the farmhouse, was a foreman on a farm for twenty-one years. He keeps milking-cows, and rears calves and young stock to fatten. He goes in for horse-breeding, and buys young horses to sell again after he has broken them in by working on the farm. He grows oats, barley, wheat, mangels, turnips, peas and beans, and potatoes. He employs no regular labour; he and his neighbour frequently co-operate in the use of horses and implements.

The arable plots are cultivated in the usual way with corn, roots, peas, beans, and potatoes. The grass holdings are used for turning out horses or running young cattle. There appeared to be a great demand for more grass land in connection with the arable holdings. It would enable the men to keep more stock on the land itself to consume the arable produce and make manure. Whilst most of the land was well farmed, a few of the plots were indifferently cultivated, and I gathered that this was largely owing to the fact that these holders lived at some distance, and had to pay for all the horse labour. Manure carting

cost from 6s. to 10s. a day, and the distance between the pigsty at home and the land prevented in some cases a liberal manuring of the allotment.

For this reason many of the smaller people cultivate their holdings at a considerable disadvantage, and can hardly be blamed if their holdings are not up to the mark of those living more on the spot.

#### COWBIT HOUSE FARM.

This farm is situated five miles from Spalding, and is approached by a side-road which is not of the best. It is 265 acres in extent; the soil is a useful loam. Some of the farm was under water for many weeks in 1904, and great damage was done to the crops, in spite of which the holders have held their own.

#### HOUSING ACCOMMODATION, ETC.

The farm-house is occupied by the largest tenant, holding 44 acres.

There are two adjoining cottages, which accommodate three of the men, holding from  $9\frac{1}{2}$  to 17 acres. Another man, holding 35 acres, occupies the shepherd's house and bottom yard.

The farm buildings and stack yards have been divided up with wooden fencing to accommodate seven tenants, three of whom occupy the houses mentioned above.

## DIVISION OF THE LAND.

The small amount of grass land has been divided up with post and wire fencing amongst the men occupying the farm buildings.

They alone, with the holder of 35 acres occupying the bottom yard, are earning a living entirely on the land. Here again the necessity of more grass land was insisted on, to enable the tenants to use the land to the best advantage.

The remaining land was divided up into lots of from 1 to 6 acres. All these holders lived at some distance, several having four or five miles to walk and cart their implements, manure, etc.

The plots were cultivated as on Willow Tree Farm. The smaller men in regular employment with 1 or 2 acres get their land ploughed by higglers at the cost of 9s. an acre. Those with 3 or 4 acres either keep horses and do higgling work, growing their own corn and potatoes, or they have some other employment at certain times of year, and use their plots to fall back on in slack times.

## YIELD OF CROPS.

The average crop of potatoes is about 6 tons to the acre, rising to 11 tons in good seasons. In 1904 many only got 3 tons, and sold them at 30s. a ton, which did not pay for their cultivation to those who had to hire horse labour. There is a great difference in the yield of the crops according to the management of the cultivators. As an

example of this, one man last year got 32 quarters of oats on 3 acres, while his neighbour on the adjoining 3 acres only got 6 quarters.

Peas sold green as a standing crop fetch from £7 to £12 an acre, exclusive of the straw which is harvested after picking.

#### INDIVIDUAL CASES.

A tenant of 17 acres, occupying one of the cottages and sharing the farm buildings, had been on a farm for twenty-one years as a labourer at 16s. a week.

He began on his 17 acres with a cow and a pig, and now has a brood mare, a cow, heifer, and three yearlings, and pigs. He grew peas, beans, oats, barley, wheat, and potatoes. He was able to do all his own labour with the help of his wife, and said he could make a living very comfortably, as all his children were out. But he was of opinion that a man bringing up a family could not do so on less than 20 acres.

One tenant of 5 acres rented another 4 from the County Council, and was making his living entirely off these 9 acres. He grew peas, beans, potatoes, and corn crops. He had built a rough wooden shed and yard in one corner of his County Council holding, where he kept pigs or young stock. He bought the latter in October to sell in the spring, and fed them on his own produce. He was of opinion that if a man worked hard, and knew how to cultivate his land properly, he ought

to be able to bring up a family on 10 acres in this district; but he did not know of anyone doing it besides himself, except those nearer the town, who went in more for market-gardening.

#### SIZE OF HOLDINGS.

Every tenant whom I interviewed seemed to think the question of the size of the holding was a most important point.

The general opinion seemed to be that on this class of land—

For a man in regular employment, who had to pay for cultivation, 1 to 2 acres was quite enough.

For higglers and other men using their holdings as adjuncts to another trade, or for men doing catch work, 4 or 5 acres were necessary to enable them to fill up all their spare time profitably.

For men with no other occupation 30 to 40 acres were necessary for ordinary farming to make a living and employ two horses profitably, and 10 to 20 if combined with market-gardening.

But, when all is said and done, the individual capacity of the holders is always a factor which must influence any result.

#### METHODS OF CO-OPERATION.

The elements of co-operation are beginning to appear. The Allotments Club has been turned into a Co-operative Credit Bank, and the deposits now amount to £225. Four per cent. is paid on the deposit money, and loans are granted at 5 per cent.

The usual difficulty is, however, encountered : the tenants dislike having to find sureties and the publicity involved in an application for a loan to a committee.

With regard to co-operation for purchase, the matter has been discussed, and it is expected that a Co-operative Society affiliated to the Agricultural Organization Society will in due course be established.

#### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The facts we have before us are these :

That 200 people have been given access to the land without having cost anybody else a halfpenny. (In 1905 the whole rent, above £1,300, was duly received; in 1906 there was only £3 6s. outstanding.)

That, taken as a whole, they are cultivating it with profit to themselves.

That small men, with little capital but their own labour, can make the land more profitable than larger men with not enough capital to cultivate the land properly or employ sufficient labour on it.

#### CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS.

The main causes which seem to have induced these satisfactory results are as follows :

The fundamental point is the *profitable character of the soil*, both as regards working and natural fertility. Its adaptability to certain crops specially suitable for cultivation by small holders has

given rise to a natural development of small holdings.

This has induced an easy system of *disposal of produce*. Agents and salesmen buying certain goods in one district are always ready to take more of the same type from a known locality where they are already dealing ; there is none of the difficulty of disposing of produce which is often experienced when starting in places where there is no local market, and where any particular cultivation is done on too small a scale to attract the attention of agents.

As an outcome of these conditions, there exists in the neighbourhood a race of men who, seeing the possibilities attending proper cultivation, and having a certain knowledge of it, even when following other occupations, are all eager to acquire land, and who, once they have acquired it, can be trusted to succeed without further assistance.

#### CONCLUSIONS.

When the following considerations are taken into account—(1) that up till 1906 no money had been laid out on the land in the way of erecting buildings, except the building of three dairies ; (2) that the land is very inconveniently situated for the larger number of the tenants, many having to walk three to four miles ; (3) that the tenants have in most cases no capital of their own to put into it—one can have no hesitation in saying that the whole undertaking has been eminently successful.

Further, if this success has been attained with

the disadvantages attending the above considerations, it leads one to suppose that a still better result could be obtained under more favourable conditions, such as would be afforded by facilities for obtaining working capital on easy terms, and for providing housing accommodation on the land itself.

### SMALL HOLDINGS OF THE NORFOLK SMALL HOLDINGS ASSOCIATION.

There are now four colonies of small holdings established in the west of Norfolk.

Three of them—viz., at Swaffham, Whissonsett, and Watton—were established by the Norfolk Small Holdings Association in 1900; and the fourth, at Nordelph, was created by the Norfolk County Council in 1904.

### ORIGIN OF THE NORFOLK SMALL HOLDINGS ASSOCIATION.

The formation of the Association was suggested to certain Norfolk gentlemen by the success of the Lincolnshire Small Holdings Association. In 1900 a syndicate was formed for the purpose of acquiring land, of which Mr. Winfrey is chairman and Mr. A. Jermyn of King's Lynn honorary secretary. As it was not found possible to rent land for the purpose, three farms were bought at the places mentioned above, making a total purchase of 338 acres, at a cost of £8,600 inclusive of enfran-



chisement, cost of conveyance, and adaptation to small holdings.

## WHISSONSETT.

Whissonsett is a purely agricultural village with a population of 450; thirty years ago it was 666. It is six miles from Fakenham, the nearest market-town and railway-station. The farm acquired is 97 acres, of which 37 acres are grass land, and lies close to the village, one end terminating at the back of the houses.

The total cost of the farm was £2,240.

The arable land is let from £1 to £1 5s. an acre, and the grass land at £1 10s. The total rent received, after deducting tithe and land tax, is £130.

## TENANTS.

There are 18 tenants, viz.: 6 agricultural labourers, 2 carpenters, 1 innkeeper, 1 shoemaker and carrier, 1 baker, 1 poulterer, 1 grocer, 1 farmer's son, 1 pensioner, 2 small holders and dealers. One acre is held by Mr. Wilson, M.P., for the use of the villagers as a recreation ground.

The farm-house is occupied by a neighbouring working farmer's son, who holds 28 acres of the land.

The farm buildings are divided amongst some of the holders, and the barn is common to all.

There are no other buildings on the land except a few put up by the tenants, and the holders live in the village.

The demand for the grass land was so great that it was divided up into 17 lots, with post and wire fencing. Four of the agricultural labourers each had 1 acre of grass land and 2 acres of arable. On the arable land they grew the ordinary cereals and roots. They kept pigs at home for manure, and those with grass fattened young stock in summer. They sold their produce to the local miller and local dealers. One of them was a jobbing labourer and kept a horse with which he ploughed, etc., for some of the others at a charge of 8s. to 10s. an acre. He was of opinion that a labourer in regular work could not manage more than an acre profitably. He complained a good deal of the small amount of labour employed by the neighbouring farmers.

The holdings at Whissonsett are practically all adjuncts to other occupations. The one exception is the largest holder of 28 acres occupying the farm-house; but I was informed that he found time to assist his father, who, though now occupying upwards of 100 acres of land, began life as an agricultural labourer, and that he could not make a whole living on his own land. The arable land is poor, and the distance from any market or railway is great, but the land lies conveniently near the village, and the holdings are undoubtedly of great benefit to their occupiers to work in with other trades. Here, as elsewhere, the demand for a little grass land was very great, and the supply was quite unequal to the demand.

An Allotments Club has been started; the members pay 9d. a month as a guarantee toward their rent; 4 per cent. interest is paid on the deposit-money. A credit bank is now being established. It remains to be seen whether the usual difficulty of getting the men to apply for loans owing to the publicity occasioned by having to come before a committee will be experienced.

## WATTON.

At Carbrooke, near Watton, 110 acres with farm-house, buildings, and three cottages were acquired. The farm abuts on a good high road under a mile from Watton Station and market, and nine miles from Swaffham.

The total cost of the farm, including the cost of adapting to small holdings, etc., was £2,953.

The land is let at from £1 an acre; the total rent received, after deducting tithe and land tax, amounts to £130.

The land here has not been divided up into very small holdings, but is let to six tenants as follows :

Small holder in farm-house, living entirely on his holding	... ..	58 acres.
Small holder with another 7 acres, living in Watton, who had been a gamekeeper, and now lives entirely on his 23 acres	... ..	16 "
Small dairy-farmer, with another 20 acres	... ..	8 "
Labourer employed regularly by an auctioneer	... ..	9 "
Labourer employed regularly by a corn merchant	... ..	10 "
Jobbing labourer with horses, who helps a son in the butchering trade	... ..	9 "

The three cottages are let separately from the land. All the above tenants, with the exception of the one occupying the farm-house, live in the neighbourhood a mile or so from the land.

No fencing-out has been necessary, the tenants occupying the different fields as they stood.

The largest farmer occupies 58 acres and the farm-house. He grows in rotation wheat, barley, roots, seeds. He buys bullocks at Michaelmas and sells them fat in the spring; he also keeps sheep, buying lambs in July and selling them fat in the spring.

He kept a brood mare, and had a three-year-old, a two-year-old, and a yearling colt from her on the place, which he hoped to sell after breaking them in and getting his work done on the land.

He went in largely for duck-dealing. There were hundreds of ducklings on the place, which he bought up all round Carbrooke and resold to dealers.

He employed one man regularly all the year round, his family all being too young to work.

The land looked remarkably clean and well farmed, though I was informed that he had received it in a foul condition. There was no doubt but that he would get on well and make a success of his business.

He was of opinion that the smaller holders of 8 to 10 acres had to farm at a disadvantage, living at some distance, with no buildings to keep stock for manure and for the consumption of their

produce, but that, nevertheless, such holdings had a great value as stepping-stones; that a man who has not the capital to take and stock a small holding all at once can do it in this way by degrees, and that they gave a man experience how to work his land and spend money on it to the best advantage. He thought most men would lose over taking a field the first year, and that they must be prepared to do so.

Another man was making an entire living on 23 acres, 7 of which he held in allotments and accommodation land in the village. He had put up a rough wooden shed on his land where he had two bullocks fattening; he kept a dairy cow and pigs at home. He considered that it was possible to live on 20 to 30 acres in that district, but that a holding of 40 acres was the most economical to have, to employ two horses profitably and employ one regular labourer. There were many jobs that could only be done by two people, and casual labour could not always be had when the weather was propitious or the crops were ready.

This farm altogether had a prosperous look about it. The land was better farmed and cleaner than when it was taken over, and the hedges looked trim and neat.

#### SWAFFHAM.

The farm acquired at Swaffham lies about a mile from the town between, or abutting on, two good main roads to Watton and Hillborough. It is on

light land on a chalk subsoil, but it is in fairly good condition taken as a whole, and will probably be capable of great improvement by good cultivation. The farm is in an excellent position, but the lack of grass land is a great disadvantage.

There are 131 acres, a house, and two cottages on the farm. Two barns have been built by the Association for the common use of the tenants, who pay for them at the rate of 1s. an acre. The total cost came to £3,407.

The land is divided up into thirty-three lots, of which twenty-four are of 1 to 4 acres, and nine from 4 to 14 acres. The rent charged is from £1 2s. 6d. to £1 7s. 6d. an acre. The total rent received, after deducting tithe and land tax, is £170.

The plots are almost entirely taken up by men having other occupations in Swaffham. Several agricultural labourers have 1-acre lots. There seems to be an opinion that a larger area is not beneficial to a labourer in regular work, as he has to pay for ploughing and to buy manure; but the more striving ones take these allotments with a hope of adding more land in time, when they can rely on catch-work for a living with a sufficient acreage to fill up their spare time.

There seemed to be already a tendency for the holdings to fall into bigger lots. Two or three of the smaller lots had been given up by roadmen working for the Urban District Council. When these lots were let by ballot they fell to tenants occupying larger holdings. One tenant, an in-

surance agent, failed, and in another case an old agricultural labourer gave up his land.

Of the two men actually living on the farm, one occupied the farm-house built by the Association, for which he paid £10 rent, and held 14 acres at £1 7s. 6d. an acre. The other one lived in one of the cottages, to which was attached a small piece of land, and held 6 acres of arable at £1 7s. 6d. He was an agricultural labourer, and did catch-work on neighbouring farms. Both men seemed to feel the want of adequate buildings for stock, and did not appear to have sufficient working capital. Where these essentials are not provided, it seems necessary for ensuring success on a small holding to select as tenants handy men who can put up serviceable buildings themselves and get over difficulties by their own perseverance and thrift.

All the land was under corn and roots or seeds, and there was no market-garden cultivation. I noticed that nearer the town there were a number of allotments where market-garden produce was extensively grown, and was struck with the fact that on all the smaller areas let out by the Small Holdings Association the crops of ordinary four-course farming were gone in for altogether. I made particular inquiries as to whether this method could possibly pay anyone on such a small scale on poor land where the crops could not be remunerative, and why market-gardening was not more gone in for. The answer seemed to be that in the case

of an agricultural labourer he had not the time to spend on more intense cultivation. Once he could get his land ploughed and sown it was practically done with till harvest, as he could manage to do the bit of hoeing at nights. Then the other men with pigs or a horse found it most profitable to use their land for growing corn and litter and winter keep for the animals, and said that it paid them better to consume the stuff they grew with their own labour at odd times than to buy.

#### SUCCESS OF HOLDINGS WHERE THERE ARE NO PARTICULARLY FAVOURABLE CIRCUM- STANCES.

In a general survey of the three farms leased by the Norfolk Association the following facts are noticeable : That whereas the holdings of the Lincolnshire Association are situated on good land, in districts where small holdings are already established naturally, and the inhabitants have a knowledge of suitable cultivation, the holdings of the Norfolk Association have none of these predisposing advantages. They are—

1. On poor land.
2. Situated in districts where the land is not adapted to any special crops, such as early potatoês, celery, crops for seed, etc. The cultivation is simply ordinary four-course farming.
3. There are no special industries in conjunction with the holdings.



4. There are no large manufacturing towns or any centres supplying good markets.

5. Some of them (Whissonsett) are far from a market or railway-station.

In fact, there seem to be none of the conditions generally looked upon as necessary factors to success.

It will therefore be interesting to note how this movement spreads locally, and to what degree it will succeed in the future. It has now been going on for seven years, and so far has attained that amount of success which is indicated by there being no apparent failures. There are always numerous applicants for land. They pay their rent regularly, and, taken as a whole, keep the land in good condition. They farm in the ordinary way, growing the usual farm crops.

It must, however, be remembered that, with the exception of a few men at Watton and one at Swaffham holding larger areas, *all* the holdings are in the nature of allotments and adjuncts; that the land is conveniently situated in each case for being held as an adjunct, and that, though not of the most productive type, it is easily worked land.

### SMALL HOLDINGS AT WING, BUCKS.

Wing is a village of 1,740 inhabitants, three miles from Leighton Buzzard, in mid Buckinghamshire. The whole of the glebe farm, of 208 acres, is let in holdings, varying from 1 to 26 acres, to

working men resident in Wing or the adjacent hamlet of Burcott.

The scheme was started in 1896, and was due to the initiative of the late Mr. Charles Cotes, of Burcott. Two local landlords consented to act as sureties for the rent. They appointed, in the first instance, a committee of working men to be responsible for the working of the scheme. But this was not found altogether satisfactory; and at the present time the committee consists of four local men—a land agent, two farmers, and the head-gardener to Mr. Leopold de Rothschild, with a secretary, who has a very small remuneration. They have the entire management, with power to evict unsuitable tenants.

The land is situated close to the village, and is crossed by two main roads, which fact has reduced road-making to a minimum, and gives easy access to all the lots. Most of the fields are also naturally watered by a brook. The pasture land has been divided by strong five-barred post and rail fencing. The posts for the whole, and on some of the plots the rails, were found by the tenants; the late Mr. Cotes generously gave the remainder of the tenants their rails. The tenants are responsible for the upkeep of the fences; but the committee, if possible, will find the rails; rates and taxes, however, swallow up so much of their surplus that this will always be the difficulty, and must be done very carefully. There are at the present time thirty-six tenants. Most of the largest holders have a piece

of grass land and a piece of arable. The committee will not let a large portion of grass without arable land being taken with it.

The average size of the grass holdings is 4 acres, the biggest being 10 acres, and the smallest 1 acre. The latter is rented for £2 5s. by a coal-hawker for turning out his horse. The average size of the arable holding is 6 acres ; one man, however, holds as much as 17 acres.

One of the arable fields was originally cut up into 75 rood lots. This was not found to be a success, and at the present time only two men hold single roods, two hold 2 roods, and the rest of the field is held in lots from 1 to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres. The failure of the smaller allotments is attributed to the fact that Wing was already very well supplied with allotments close to the village, this field being at the further end of the farm and some distance from the men's homes.

The land is held on a yearly tenancy with six months' notice, terminating at Michaelmas.

The tenants have short agreements, the chief terms being that there is to be no subletting, the land is to be kept clean, and the grass land must not be mowed two years running.

The tenants are responsible for the wooden fencing, and the hedges and ditches on the pasture land. The committee undertakes the hedging of the arable land.

The rent paid to the vicar is £290. The receipts from the tenants amount to £349 4s. 5d. The

surplus of £59 4s. 5d. goes in rates and taxes (the poor rate amounts to £30), and a small fee to the secretary. There is usually a sum of about £10 in hand for hedging, draining tiles, etc.

The arable land is let at from £1 1s. to £1 5s. an acre, and the grass land at from £2 to £2 10s.

#### CHARACTER OF TENANTS.

With the exception of six men, all the tenants started life as agricultural labourers.

The six men comprise two bricklayers, two grocers, one postmaster, one baker.

The others are now for the most part coal merchants, hauliers, and carriers. There appears to be a good deal of work for carters of all description in the neighbourhood, the Rothschilds using much labour of this sort. The men had managed to save enough out of farm wages to get a horse and cart, and the possibility of acquiring small pieces of land to work in connection with their business has been invaluable to them. The two men holding single roods are both jobbing labourers: one is a thatcher, etc., and has a pony; the other a hedger, rick-builder, etc.

#### CULTIVATION.

The crops grown on the arable land are chiefly wheat, oats, potatoes, mangels, and swedes; also beans and peas, early vetches, and on one holding mustard. Even the very small lots are all devoted to ordinary farm crops.

One man only has gone in for market-gardening. He is a jobbing gardener, and holds 2 roods. He grows currants, gooseberries, and strawberries, selling them as plants. He does very well, and the committee would like to extend his holding, but no land is available.

A certain amount of stock is kept besides the horses the men use in their other occupations. Five of the tenants have cows—one man as many as six—and a fair retail trade in milk is done in the village. Several have sheep, and some have pigs kept at home. The latter are being increasingly kept; at one time they were not much gone in for, owing to trouble with swine fever.

#### DISPOSAL OF PRODUCE.

Leighton Buzzard is the nearest market town, three miles distant. Aylesbury is nine miles away on a good high road. But the produce is for the most part grown for the men's own use, for foddering their horses, etc. Some of the roots are sold to farmers and cattle-dealers, and the potatoes in Leighton market. The wheat is generally thrashed at harvest and sold at once; the remainder of the crops are used for the various live stock. The committee make no restrictions as to selling produce, their powers being so autocratic that they can immediately take steps to stop any man starving his land.

## BUILDINGS, ETC.

There is one farm-house on the land which is let separately to one of the tenants. The buildings attached to the latter are divided amongst the tenants, and the rick-yard and barns are used in common amongst the men holding arable land.

One of the men, a coal merchant and carrier, who had started as an agricultural labourer, and now holds 10 acres of grass and 17 acres of plough land, has put up a useful wooden shed for the sum of £20. It is large enough to tie up three horses or cows, and has a sheep-pen at the back.

Considering the undertaking as a whole, the following points strike one as conducive to the success which is very apparent :

1. The convenient situation of the farm close to the village.
2. The natural water-supply to the grass fields.
3. The little road-making necessary owing to the land being crossed by two roads.

The last two circumstances enabled the land to be let at a reasonable rent, owing to the absence of much initial capital expenditure.

4. The local requirements seem to find employment for an unusually large number of men of the haulier description. To this class of man a small holding is of particular advantage, as it not only supplies him with the maintenance of his horses, but he is enabled by means of these horses, connected with his trade, to cultivate his own holding

in the cheapest possible way—viz., by a profitable use of time and horse labour which might otherwise be idle.

That there is a genuine local demand for land, which is always one of the necessary points for success, is shown by the fact that there are seventeen applications for land when it should be available.

An important point to be noticed in connection with this undertaking is the fact that thirty of the tenants were originally farm labourers, or are still jobbing labourers. The farming of the district is largely dairy, much milk being sent to London. There has been a considerable amount of land put down to grass, the proportion being now about three to one of arable land. In all probability these men, if they had had no opportunity beyond farm work, would have been lost to the district. As it is a number of them are available at harvest time, and their children are being brought up with agricultural knowledge.

It might be noted that this place is not naturally a district of small farming. There are no small holdings in the immediate district where entire livings are being made out of farming alone. The place, however, seems to have always been well supplied with allotments, which has no doubt contributed to keeping men who are at other occupations in touch with cultivation of the land.

## CHAPTER VII

### SMALL HOLDINGS ASSOCIATIONS OF SPONTANEOUS ORIGIN

THE three undertakings described in the last chapter have all been initiated through the exertions of local men interested in the small holding question, and with some knowledge of local requirements. They serve to show what can be done without any outside help, and merely by means of a wise organization. Here this organization is carried on in rural districts amongst the agricultural class by individuals outside of that class themselves, but conscious of its needs.

In this chapter I propose to deal with associations which have arisen spontaneously amongst the people themselves who wanted land. I know of no instance of this kind of thing springing up amongst agricultural men; the instances I am about to deal with occur amongst the artisan class in or near small manufacturing towns, who display, as a rule, more intelligence and energy towards new developments than their rural brethren, and have, moreover, greater facilities in the way of capital to give them a start.



This type of association does not, perhaps, furnish such striking examples of the possibilities of development in rural districts as those we have just been considering; but it shows very clearly what can be done towards getting town people gradually on to the land in a natural, and therefore successful, manner. It affords, moreover, an instructive contrast to the methods of all idealist schemes. I propose to take three undertakings, each of a slightly differing character in the way of organization, but all having practically identical aims and results.

#### SMALL HOLDINGS OF THE DESBOROUGH CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY.\*

Desborough is a small town of 3,900 inhabitants, five miles south-east of Market Harborough in Northamptonshire. Iron ore is found in the district, and there are boot and shoe and corset manufactories.

The Co-operative Society was started in 1863 as a trading society; at that time the population was only 1,250. The number of members is now 945, and the turnover in 1905 was £15,837.

In 1885 the Society bought 20 acres of land at £60 an acre, and cut it up into allotments for its members. This transaction arose through the fact that many of the members were anxious to get hold of a piece of land, and the Society happened

\* The following account is taken from the evidence given by the secretary, Mr. Jesse Marlow, before the Committee on Small Holdings, 1906.

to have money in hand to invest. These plots are now being sold largely for building sites, as the town is rapidly growing, and the original purchasers often get 200 per cent. profit on them.

In 1894,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  acres were bought at £66 an acre, and cut up into sixty-eight plots averaging 20 poles; they were resold at about £80 per acre.

In 1898 the Society decided to purchase an estate of 408 acres with two sets of farm premises, and containing iron ore. This was done mainly as an investment for the savings of members, which were going out of Desborough or into the post-office. Seventeen acres only have been divided so far, the land being valuable for working the iron ore.

Many of the purchasers pay for their plots outright, otherwise payment is made by instalments. A very common way is for a member to leave the annual amount of profit credited to him towards liquidating the cost of purchase; in this way he buys the land almost without knowing it.

The purchasers are all artisans; when in regular work these men cannot manage more than 20 or 40 poles, but there is an increasing demand for larger plots from the older men, who are getting replaced by younger hands, and who, if it were not for the benefits they receive from the cultivation of their plots, would be seriously handicapped.

The plots are all cultivated for fruit, flowers, and vegetables. Some of the holders put up glass houses and go in for tomatoes, grapes, pot plants, etc. The fruit is largely apples and plums, and

not so much bush fruits. The soil varies from a stiff loam to a light sandy loam.

A great many pigs are kept, of which the bulk are used for home consumption, or sold cured to the Society.

#### DISPOSAL OF PRODUCE.

Much of the produce is consumed locally. When asked if there was no local glut, Mr. Marlow, the secretary, stated that this was not the case, and that a demand seemed to be created by the production, especially in the case of tomatoes. Small wholesale dealers also collect produce for the markets at Market Harborough and Kettering, which is six miles distant.

The following two instances are given of men making an entire living on 1 acre of land :

1. The owner is forty years old, and has four children (all under ten years of age); he was formerly a coachman and gardener, and then a shoemaker. He began business in 1895 on his own account, with a 20-acre plot of land and one greenhouse (9 feet by 20 feet). He borrowed money from the local building society to build his dwelling-house. He now has 62 perches under cultivation, and five green-houses. He has recently acquired  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres of grass land on easy terms of purchase, and proposes to plant this with fruit-trees. He employs one man occasionally—cultivates ferns, tomatoes, cucumbers, flowers, window and bedding plants. His specialities are flowers for

button-holes, wreaths, and bouquets. He has secured a large number of first prizes at exhibitions.

2. The owner is a man of fifty-three years, with no children living at home; he worked until 1902 in a shoe factory, and cultivated a small garden in spare time. He then purchased a house and 3 roods 10 perches of land from the Co-operative and local building societies out of his savings and share of accumulated profits in the former society. He has two green-houses, and cultivates tomatoes, chrysanthemums, bedding and window plants, gooseberries, currants, and other fruit. At the Crystal Palace Show of 1902 he secured one third, four second, and three first prizes. At a recent local show he gained ten prizes.

When questioned as to his views on the promotion of such schemes by Government, and as to what bodies would best bear the responsibility, Mr. Marlow stated that he would like to see the responsibility come spontaneously from the majority of people concerned, and that he thought the desire ought to come from them in the first instance for any scheme to be successful. His idea is practically that on which the Danish schemes are based—*i.e.*, that they should be *started* by the people and *helped* by the Government.

THE RUSHDEN PERMANENT ALLOTMENT AND  
'SMALL HOLDINGS SOCIETY, LTD.\*

Rushden, in Northamptonshire, has had a very rapid increase of population, owing to the shoe-making industry. It has now a population of 12,453. The Society was founded in 1892. It has 500 members, and rents 110 acres of land, which are let in plots, varying from 10 poles to 8 acres, to about 450 men. It has also bought 20 acres at £50 an acre, and resold them to members in plots varying from 10 poles to 3 acres. The purchase money has to be paid off in six years. Fifty-one acres of the land are rented at £1 15s. an acre on a twenty years' lease, and are relet to the men at the rate of £2 and upwards. Two fields nearer the town, which are prospective building sites, are held on a yearly tenancy. Twenty-seven acres of glebe land are let out in larger plots of 1 to 8 acres, many men holding 3, 4, and 5 acres at £1 7s. 6d. an acre.

The tenants of the allotments are nearly all shoemakers. The larger plots are held by retired shoemakers or agricultural jobbing men, who go in for dairying or market-gardening.

Many of the older men are anxious to get more land, so as to have enough for a living; age is becoming a serious drawback in the shoe trade, and men of forty-five and fifty years are finding

\* Taken from the evidence of the secretary, Mr. W. Gutteridge, before the Small Holdings Committee, 1906.

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it increasingly difficult to compete with younger hands.

Mr. Gutteridge proposes that registered societies of suitable standing should have the same powers as Parish Councils to acquire land compulsorily.

### THE NORTHERN ALLOTMENT SOCIETY.\*

This Society was started at Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1890, with the object of providing small holdings, chiefly for artisans, for the cultivation of fruit and flowers. Anyone could become a member on payment of one shilling per annum, and was then entitled to receive all information concerning opportunities for acquiring land. The money was used to defray postage, printing, etc. The affairs of the Society were managed by a committee of twenty, and an unpaid treasurer and secretary. These officers would consider any estate which they learnt would be on the market, and, if they thought it suitable, the matter was brought up for discussion at a general meeting of the members. If a sufficient number of members sent in applications for part of it, negotiations were set on foot to acquire the land, acting under the instructions of the applicants, who now became entirely responsible for that particular undertaking and its subsequent treatment.

During the fifteen years from 1890 to 1905 the Society has been the means of promoting the pur-

\* The following is taken from an account of the Society by the secretary, Mr. J. W. Wakinshaw, in the *Journal of the Board of Agriculture* for July, 1905.

chase of 1,625 acres, costing £176,343 14s. Of these, 619 acres have been allotted amongst purchasers, and the remainder, comprising seven estates, have been held as joint-stock properties.

In the case of the estates which have been allotted, the purchasers agree amongst themselves beforehand on all conditions of purchase and further development, such as road-making, water-supply, approval of building-plans, etc. The size of the plots is arrived at by taking the greatest common measure of the acreage required by the members; the various plots are then valued by an expert, the valuation including the share of the estimated cost for roads, fencing, surveying, and legal work, and any other items which have been agreed upon. Should the members fail to agree as to the appointment of the different lots, these are put up to private auction, the highest bidder getting the lot. No bid is accepted which is under the valuation placed upon it; this ensures the total sum being obtained which is required. Any surplus goes into the common fund, and any sum remaining over after the collective work on the estate has been finished is returned as a bonus to the purchasers according to the cost of their respective properties; in the same way money is raised should there be a deficit.

The Society appeals to a various number of persons with different objects, and it will be seen that it is practically by an amalgamation of these diverse interests for mutual benefit that the Society

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has been in the position to carry out so much. It is pointed out by Mr. Wakinshaw that, in a place like Newcastle, there is a limit to the number of men willing and competent to go in for the special cultivation which it was the original intention of the Society to cater for. But, by being very elastic in their methods, they have attracted into it those who want land purely for residential purposes, also those who merely want an investment for their money. They are thus able to deal with things on a very much larger scale than would otherwise be possible. In the secretary's own words: 'But for the residential and investing purchasers, not one of the estates purchased under the auspices of the Society could at the time have been acquired; with their aid it became possible for the horticultural member to participate in an enterprise which otherwise he was too weak to handle.' At the same time the occupation of the land, leading to the formation of new colonies, has been a very good piece of business for the investing member.

### SMALL HOLDINGS AS A MEANS OF CONNECTING INDUSTRY WITH AGRICULTURE.

The undertakings we have been considering are of very great importance, as indicating lines on which a closer connection of agriculture with industry can be effected. All industrial nations are ultimately dependent on agriculture, and one of our immediate problems is to find out the best methods of combining the two arts. It seems as



if a small-holding system might be the path leading from the one to the other.

Garden cities and the re-establishment of petty trades in rural districts may bring this about in one direction; but, from what we have studied in the foregoing pages, it would seem as if the mere supply of land to artisans in places where there exists a healthy demand for it is likely to prove a means of leading men gradually from industrial to agricultural pursuits.

We know that amongst the abiding characteristics of modern industry are the periods of slack trade and diminished employment, not to speak of the seasonal fluctuations, producing annually the same results in a minor degree.

Moreover, there is a necessity in many trades (though more especially in those relying on casual labour) for the existence of a standing reserve of labour; it is to the extent that the unemployed problem is due to this reserve (as distinguished from surplus) labour that a system of connecting industrial pursuits with the cultivation of the land would solve the question of unemployment.

Finally, we see how, in the case of the boot and shoe industry, a small holding has taken the place of an old-age pension to those older men who are getting displaced by younger labour.

In the case of trades, what we have to deal with is not so much unemployment as part employment. As regards the land, we can often only cultivate it profitably on a small scale with the help of

capital earned from another source. The factors are all ready for that organization which will weld them into a connected working scheme, when the casual labourer or the artisan on half time derives the other half of his living from land which alone would not suffice to support him.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HOW LANDLORDS CAN CREATE SMALL HOLDINGS

WE have now dealt with a very great variety of schemes for the artificial creation of small holdings ; in every case we have seen how the success practically depends upon the amount of local knowledge evinced by the promoters, and the possibilities that existed for fostering local growths in a natural manner. In those cases where the schemes have been initiated by town-men or outsiders without any real understanding of the conditions, the results have only too often afforded openings for adverse critics ; where, however, the question has been taken up by persons founding their activities on a real knowledge of actual requirements, the success of their undertakings has been unqualified, and this, moreover, in the face of all those difficulties which are created for the most part by the unnecessary opposition which invariably confronts the pioneer.

In connection with these facts it is important to recall that there is one class above all others who, presumably, should be the best acquainted with

land questions, and live actually in touch with local agricultural conditions. The landowners of England have had so far the whip-hand; they have the land, and they have the opportunities for first-hand knowledge. In only too many cases, it is true, any knowledge they possess comes to them second-hand, through their agents, whose traditional platitudes about the cost of buildings and the likelihood of being left with the worst land on their hands are accepted with unquestioned faith. A new type of landlord is also rapidly springing up in England who regards his estate solely from the point of view of the amenities afforded by the possession of land, and without any of the personal sense of responsibility which, in spite of the abuse poured on them, does certainly exist almost universally amongst the older type.

In this chapter I propose to give some examples of what actually has been done by some landowners who have given their personal attention to this question. I would point out that holdings created in this way on private estates approximate nearest to that type, described in the first chapter, of holdings 'of natural occurrence.' In each case the schemes have been carried out on an economic basis, and these economic results have been arrived at by merely supplying small men on the lines dictated by the requirements which were an outcome of local agricultural conditions.

Fortunately there are many landowners in England who, though averse to any form of

legislation to promote a more universal creation of small holdings, yet recognize the value of such holdings when they can be fostered locally as a natural growth.

A large proportion of these are very willing to do something towards helping the movement by cutting up large holdings on their own estates, but they cannot afford to risk possible failure or loss of money. While in some localities the existing conditions may be obviously favourable for small-holding cultivation, there are many more places where the land may not be of first-rate suitability. If the movement is of national importance, the question of how far it is safe to go under these less suitable conditions must be faced. A good many landowners cannot have a very large field of choice, and yet within their limitations may do something.

It is of as great importance to prevent the starting of enterprises doomed to failure as to encourage action where suitable conditions, wisely considered, promise a certainty of success.

Again, there are not many landowners who have the capital to embark upon any scheme involving a considerable initial outlay, even where there appears to be every certainty of a remunerative return.

On the other hand, there are innumerable cases where much may be done by adaptation of existing conditions without any more outlay than can be repaid in a very short time by the increased rental.

In the following reports illustrations will be found of what has been done by a few landowners, under varying conditions, who have pursued this latter policy.

### THE POSSIBILITIES OF AN ESTATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL HOLDINGS.

Before giving them in detail, I propose very briefly to consider what are the essential points to be taken into account in reviewing the possibilities for the creation of small holdings on any particular estate.

It would seem to be an important factor in the success of any scheme that the supply of small holdings should come, in the first instance, as an answer to a well-established local demand—that is to say, that the small holdings should, as it were, grow out of the agricultural or other conditions of the district, and not be introduced as a new order of things on experimental lines.

This statement does not mean that it would not be possible to initiate types of small-holding cultivation in districts where they are not now to be found, for there are many instances of the successful introduction of such new types through the endeavours or the expert local knowledge of one man.

But without this rather special knowledge, which

most landowners would not possess, it is safer to proceed on known lines, and to aim merely at supplying the demand which already exists, to a greater or lesser degree, in most parts of the country.

Proceeding on these lines, there are three main points for the owner of an estate to consider :

- I. The actual local demand for holdings.
- II. The type of holdings required in the particular district.
- III. What facilities exist on his estate for meeting this demand on the lines required.

#### I. THE LOCAL DEMAND FOR HOLDINGS.

A mere absence of definite applications for small holdings can never be taken as a sign of an absence of desire for them. A safe gauge of the demand is the amount of competition evinced for such small holdings as already exist, and the relative amount of rent which small men show it is worth their while to pay, compared with the current rent for larger farms.

It is not enough to be content with the fact that there is an unsatisfied demand. Before the next two points mentioned above are considered, it will be necessary to analyze the demand—*i.e.*, ascertain what are the class of men whose needs want supplying—and then, in the light of these requirements, consider any facilities which exist on the estate for meeting them.

It may be that there are men able to take and stock a small farm of a large enough area to produce an entire living, and that this type of holding is possible under the given agricultural conditions ; or it may be that there are men in regular or job work to whom holdings merely as adjuncts would be valuable, by enabling them to fill up odd times profitably, or by helping them to carry on their particular occupations to better advantage.

Or the district may not be one particularly adapted to small-holding cultivation *as such* ; but there may be village tradesmen or artisans in connection with whose trade a small holding is such an advantage that they are able to pay more for the holding than the land *qua* land is worth. In this way any extra expense in adaptation is met. This is often the case in purely agricultural villages, in places where local industries exist, or any form of work such as winter work in woods, mining, quarrying, draining, or much agricultural piece-work in districts of very large arable farms.

Or it may be, again, that there is a definite type of small-holding cultivation peculiar to the district, which needs facilities for extension on the same lines.

## II. THE TYPE OF SMALL HOLDINGS REQUIRED.

The considerations under the previous heading will have given some indication of the kind of holding wanted by local men.



From the point of view of present considerations, there are two broad types of small holdings :

1. *The Market-Gardening Type*, or the growing of special crops on arable land.

Apart from the question of housing, this type can be established by merely staking out suitable land, and involves *no* expense to a landlord.

2. *The Small Farm Type*, whether

(a) Grass holdings ;

(b) Mixed holdings ;

(c) Purely arable holdings, with stock.

This type involves more or less expense in fencing, water-supply, and adaptation of buildings.

*The Size of the Holding*.—There is perhaps no more important point to consider than the size of the holding.

In every district it will be found that there are certain sizes which have proved the most economic for that district ; and that if a man gets a holding too large or too small, he is considerably handicapped, either by not being able to cope with an acreage beyond his capital and the amount of labour he can provide, or by having an area on which he cannot fully employ his time.

### III. EXISTING FACILITIES ON AN ESTATE.

It remains now to be considered what facilities exist on the estate for establishing, by adaptation, and without any great initial cost, the type of holding which appears to be required.

Firstly, it is supposed, not that any established tenant on a larger holding is to be evicted, but that only those farms which fall in will be under consideration for any scheme on a fairly large scale.

In the case, however, of the market-gardening type of holding, and in adaptations on a small scale in isolated instances, it is sometimes possible, without injury to a larger farmer, to take certain fields, or parts of fields, off his farm.

It is not to be denied that this way of proceeding is likely to meet with much opposition from the farmer in question. It will be at once assumed that the only grass land or the best bit of arable land is wanted; and, as no one contemplates such a proceeding, the farmer's very general enmity against the smaller men can only be ventilated by assuring the landlord that the field he proposes taking (even if it be the poorest) is of the greatest value to the farm.

Cases of this kind can only be dealt with on their individual merits; and it may often be found that the needs of the smaller men can be met without any injustice to the sitting tenant.

As regards schemes which are on a larger scale than the mere staking out of a suitable field or fields, and which involve a certain amount of adaptation, the following points have to be noticed:

1. *Housing*.—Are there cottages to which adja-

cent land (or land at no great distance) could be attached, or barns which could be converted into cottages?\*

And, in the case of the original farmhouse, does it lend itself to conversion into two cottages?

2. *Buildings*.—Are there buildings (outlying barns, sheds, etc.) which could be converted in connection with the land on which they stand, or remains of larger buildings adjacent to the cottages in question? Or does the steadying of the original farm admit of subdivision amongst the various new tenants? Or are any of the would-be small holders prepared to pay such an increased rent for the land as to cover interest on the cost of new buildings?

3. *Subdivision and Approach*.—Is the land so situated that the cost of subdivision will not be great? *E.g.*, is the farm already more or less divided up into reasonably-sized fields? Does much of it lie adjacent to roads and lanes, so as to minimize the cost of road-making?

4. *Water - Supply*.—In the case of pasture land, in the absence of any natural source, the facilities for watering stock will have to be considered.

Having decided that the land in question lends itself in one or more of the above particulars to subdivision, the next step will be to draw up an estimated profit and loss account. The outgoings

\* This has been successfully carried out in many instances, and is worthy of more consideration.

side of this account should be dealt with first. This will include the rent of the land in the state, before it is cut up, the interest and sinking fund on any buildings, fences, water-supply, and the laying down of permanent pasture, where these items have been necessary. Finally, if the scheme is done on purely business lines, there should be a reserve fund to cover contingencies. It has been estimated by judicious landowners that this should be at least 15 per cent. of the rent of the holding, but others might be satisfied with a narrower margin.

When all these items have been added up, the landowner will be in a better position to communicate with prospective small tenants, and see whether their desire to rent small holdings is effective in the economic sense—that is, will they pay enough to make it worth his while?

The conditions on various estates vary so enormously that it is obviously impossible to do more than give this brief indication of the lines which preliminary considerations should take. How different landowners have pursued this policy will be seen in the following reports.

SMALL HOLDINGS ON MR. HARRIS'S  
ESTATE AT HALWILL, NORTH  
DEVON.

THE small holdings on Mr. Harris's estate date from 1874. They were created largely by taking small bits of land off the larger farms, and adding them to adjoining cottages.

The district is purely agricultural, and the laying down of much arable land to grass since the times of depression caused a diminished demand for labour, which would no doubt have resulted in the usual depopulation if the holdings had not been created.

As it is, while the rural population for the county has gone down 30 per cent., the population of Halwill parish has gone up 60 per cent.

## AGRICULTURE OF DISTRICT.

It is essentially a cattle-rearing district. The North Devon breed is gone in for exclusively. On large and small farms alike the general practice is to rear the calves and sell them at two years old. They are largely bought up by dealers to go to Sussex, where they are fattened for the Chichester Market.

On the larger farms quite two-thirds are now laid down to pasture, and oats is the chief corn

crop grown. The ordinary shift is seeds, roots, oats, seeds, or, if the land is clean, seeds, roots, oats, wheat, seeds.

A feature of the country which offers special facilities for the subdivision of farms is the large number of small hedged enclosures, often of a few acres only in extent. Their object, I was informed, was that of shelter; but, as they were most numerous in the lower lying and more sheltered places, it seems probable that the explanation given me by one of the oldest inhabitants is nearer the mark—viz., that the dry patches on the undrained moorland were cultivated, and hedged in to prevent the encroachments of the animals turned loose on the open stretches of unreclaimed land. In the process of consolidation into larger farms many of these enclosures were destroyed and the hedges levelled. Where, however, as in this case, they have been left, it is a great help towards what is probably a return to the former conditions of the district.

The chief items of expense in the conversion of larger holdings are here at a minimum: the land is already fenced out in small enclosures; there is nearly always sufficient provision of water; and there remains but to add adjacent enclosures to the cottages, which would in all probability be vacated if the men were dependent only on hired agricultural labour.

## FORMATION OF SMALL HOLDINGS.

It is mainly by the above methods that the small holdings have been made. A certain number of new cottages have been built by Mr. Harris, and land has been added to them. Also, since the advent of the railway, new cottages have been put up for the railway men, who take small bits of land.

Four hundred and fifty acres are now held by twenty-five tenants, in holdings varying from 3 to 40 acres.

## TYPE OF HOLDINGS.

The holdings seem to fall naturally into two classes:

1. Cottage holdings with land up to 18 acres. These are nearly all in pasture, with a cultivated strip for roots, etc. There is little work attached to the place besides what can be done by the women and children, so that the tenants work regularly for wages. Many of them are employed by Mr. Harris. A few milking-cows are kept for butter and clotted cream. The calves are generally reared and sold as yearlings or two-year-olds. Pigs are gone in for largely. The usual practice is to buy them in at seven weeks, and sell them in another six weeks or so.

2. Small farm holdings up to 40 acres. None of the tenants make an entire living on these holdings. They hold them in connection with some

other business, such as dealing or slaughtering, or do occasional job work. They are worked much the same as the smaller holdings, except that there is a larger proportion of tillage land, on which winter food for the cattle and horses is grown; and, in many cases, in addition to milking-cows, bullocks are kept for fattening.

I was informed that it was considered possible to make an entire living on 40 to 60 acres of the better land. I did not, however, find anyone doing it, the holdings of that size having generally a proportion of poor land, and the tenants farming them employed labour and went in for dealing, etc.

The possibility of turning out their cattle on the adjoining moorlands at the rate of 1s. a week considerably influences the method of farming. It makes it possible to shut up the whole of the grass land for hay, and thus carry twice as much stock as would otherwise be possible. The general practice seems to be to have the cows calving for winter profit, not only on account of the higher prices then obtained for the cream and butter, but for the convenience of having them dry at the time of the year when they will be turned out on the moorland.

Rushes are largely used for thatch and litter. Artificials are used to a certain extent, but the general practice is to consume their own stuff and get as much farmyard manure as possible in that way. The small people derive most of their fuel from the hedges (largely beech), which are allowed to grow to a great size and are cut down at intervals.



## QUALITY OF LAND, ETC.

A great part of the land now under cultivation is reclaimed moorland, and seems to produce fair crops of oats and roots ; it seems specially suitable in places for permanent pasture, as hay is the main crop. The North Devon breed of cattle are hardy, and thrive on pastures which would not suit a heavier class of cattle. A good deal of the land is a yellow clay, which, the inhabitants say, is ' either iron or mire.' It is impossible to get on it in a wet spring, and it bakes hard after wet in summer. This year (1905) the oats are very late, owing to the delay caused by the late rains, and after a week's drought the harrows could not get through it.

## DISPOSAL OF PRODUCE.

The markets are : Okehampton, 10 miles ; Holsworthy, 7 miles ; Launceston, 10 miles ; and Tavistock.

The small people's produce is chiefly bought up by dealers. A very large number of pigs and sheep are sent to London from Halwill, and there are two big slaughter-houses near the station, which give employment to a number of men holding land.

The pig-dealers come round with young pigs to sell to the small people, buying them up later when fat. Butter, cream, and poultry are bought up by the local regraters for the Plymouth and Torquay markets.

In connection with this question there would appear to be an opening for beneficial organization in the disposal of clotted cream, which is manufactured on every cottage holding. The price given by the dealers is the same as that for butter, falling as low as 10d. or 11d. a pound in the summer. When the retail price of this commodity in London is 2s. a pound, it seems as if a considerably higher price might be received by the producers, which would add materially to the possibilities of small pasture holdings.

#### LABOUR.

The average wage of the district is 15s. a week, without a cottage. There is not much farm piece-work, but good wages can be obtained for road-work, draining, etc.

#### PRICE OF LAND, RENT, ETC.

The average value of mixed moor and good land is about £10 an acre. Mr. Harris averages the value of his estate at about £15 an acre. Building-sites near the station, etc., have been sold at £300 an acre.

The rent for larger farms runs from 11s. to 13s., up to £1 an acre for the very best.

The small holdings are let at the following averages:

For the enclosed moorland brought into cultivation by the tenants, 5s. an acre, with the under-

standing that the rent will not be raised on improvements.

For arable land, up to 15s. an acre.

For good pasture, up to £3 10s. an acre.

The small holdings are held on a yearly tenancy, with the assurance that no one shall be turned out who pays his rent regularly and cultivates his land fairly. Mr. Harris pays tithe, rates, and taxes.

There are the usual evidences—invariably found where labouring men have the opportunity of getting on to a bit of land—of men who have worked their way up to comparative prosperity.

I visited the holding of one man who began life as a drainer at 18s. a week. He started with a few acres, and gradually increased his holding, part of which is reclaimed moorland at 4s. an acre, and on which a purchaser of the crop informed me he had grown seventy bushels of oats to the acre. He now farms 90 acres, keeps the village shop, and does a large trade, buying up poultry and butter for Torquay, finding employment for outside labour beside that of his own family.

Another holding of 14 acres was rented at £15 8s., including the house, by a man who worked regularly at the slaughterhouse. He employed a man two or three days a week at busy times, and his wife managed the stock. He had six cows, two mares and a foal, and pigs and poultry. The pasture had all been mown for hay, and the cows sent out on to the moor at 1s. 6d. per head for the whole summer. On 3 or 4 acres of tillage there

were strips of oats, mangolds, swedes, potatoes, and cabbage. The man possessed his own hay-mower, tedder, and American hay-rake.

On another holding of 8 acres, all in pasture, I saw eighty head of sheep and four cows. The man was a sheep-dealer and slaughterer, and used his land chiefly for running the sheep between buying and selling. He had a very large stack of well-harvested hay in the corner of one field, and the pasture was in excellent condition. He paid £19 rent, which included a very good house, worth £9 or £10 per annum.

There seem to be two points of particular interest in the history of the development of small holdings on this estate.

First, it is to be noticed what a very little capital outlay has been needed in a case like this to create a sufficient number of holdings, not only to stem the rural exodus which seemed inevitable, but actually to increase the population.

By being guided in his adaptation of the land and buildings entirely by the local demand, Mr. Harris has succeeded in establishing that type of small holding which is an outcome of the natural agricultural conditions of the country.

This brings us to the second point: how, in an essentially pastoral district devoted principally to the rearing of cattle, far from large towns or any markets suitable for the ordinary produce of small holdings, on indifferent land at 600 feet above the sea-level, the whole thing is a success.

I attribute this success, under conditions which one would not be inclined to look upon as favourable, mainly to the two following factors :

1. The moorland run, which makes it possible to keep a larger head of stock per acre, and so work the holdings more economically.

2. The fact that the ordinary daily work on this kind of holding can be done by the women, leaving the men free to earn wages outside.

#### DECLINE OF PAUPERISM.

It is a significant fact that the amount received yearly for parish relief seldom reaches one half the sum allotted to the parish.

The number of people at present receiving relief is five, and of these two are people who have come in from another parish. One of the number who is in receipt of outdoor relief is an old man on a small holding, who would have to receive full relief if he was not able to maintain himself partly on the land.

#### BENEFIT OF SMALL HOLDINGS TO LANDOWNERS.

Apart from financial considerations, Mr. Harris considers that one of the benefits conferred on landowners by small holdings lies in the satisfactory class of workmen and tenants which it creates on an estate. This is especially the case where the small holdings are a sort of premium for the best men, who have worked their way on to them by thrift and industry.

SMALL HOLDINGS ON THE ESTATE  
OF MR. S. M. BLIGH, CILMERY,  
BUILTH WELLS.

Mr. Bligh's estate in Brecknockshire is situated at the villages of Cilmery (otherwise called Cefn-y-bedd) and Llangammarch Wells, between Builth and Llandovery.

The land is on the Silurian formation, and is 500 feet above sea-level in the valleys, rising to 1,500 feet. The farming of the district, therefore, is chiefly cattle-rearing, with sheep-runs on the hills, and there is not much plough land.

A large number of the farms are of that size on which a man can make an entire living, with the help of his family and without hired labour. But they would only come under the category of small holdings as regards rental, which runs from £20 to £30 a year, the acreage being from 100 to 150 acres, much of which would be merely sheep-run.

Mr. Bligh is of opinion that in this district this is the type of farm to avoid, and that farms under £30 do not pay the landlord, and afford a very poor living for the tenant. His contention is that where land is so poor that the profit yielded to a small man without much capital is at its lowest, it is impossible to get an economic return on the necessary outlay on houses and buildings. This opinion, which he holds very strongly, makes it all the more interesting to see how he is enabled to get this

## PRICE OF LAND—MARKETS 277

economic return by cutting up certain suitable farms.

The largest farms in the neighbourhood do not exceed a rental of £200 a year.

### RENT.

The average rent of these is 7s. 6d. an acre, the prices varying on Mr. Bligh's estate from 3s. 7d. to 14s. an acre.

### PRICE OF LAND.

Very little land ever comes into the market. The average price at the present time works out at about thirty years' purchase.

### MARKETS.

Builth is the nearest market-town. It is two miles from Cilmeri, and eight from Llangammarch Wells. It is one of the largest sheep markets in South Wales and an excellent market for store cattle.

The prosperity of the place is added to by the visitors to the neighbouring mineral springs. Llan-drindod is eleven miles from Cilmeri, and there are also wells at Llangammarch Wells, which have opened up the place to visitors to a certain degree.

### WAGES.

Farm-labourers living in get from £25 to £30 when full-grown men; boys of eighteen can get £20 to £25.

## 278 PARTITION OF CEFN-Y-BEDD FARM

### PARTITION OF FARMS.

Since 1903 Mr. Bligh has cut up two of his farms, comprising a total acreage of 217·718. He has thereby raised the rental from £150 9s. 6d. to £249 0s. 6d. Save for an outlay of £47 15s., the interest on which is included in the rent, this is calculated exclusive of any money spent in draining, for which 5 per cent. interest is received separately. The details of the transaction in each case are given below. The land is let to small people in neighbouring houses and following other occupations.

#### *Cefn-y-bedd Farm.*

Total acreage, 118·493.

Rent and tithe up to March, 1904, £105 12s. 6d.

The farm included farmhouse, buildings, and four cottages. It is now subdivided as follows :

Occupation of Tenant.			Acreage.	Rent and Tithe.		
				£	s.	d.
Farmer	...	...	65·000	46	5	0
			3·427	4	0	0
Wife of railway man	...	...	5·863	11	0	0
Insurance agent	...	...	5·685	22	0	0
			(with farmhouse and half the buildings)			
Grocer	...	...	4·500	9	0	0
Farmer	...	...	32·427	29	10	0
Cottages	...	...		20	0	0
Plantation occupied by owner	...	...	1·591			
			118·493	141	15	0
Original rent			...	105	12	6
Increase in rental			...	£36	2	6



*Expense of Conversion.*—The land being let in fields already fenced out, there was no expenditure entailed in converting it into smaller lots. One small field alone needed subdivision for the needs of the smaller tenant, which was done with posts and wire for £2 11s., the landlord not charging for his own timber; £1 15s. was spent in helping to lay down old fences which the late tenant had let fall into decay. The land in the smaller lots is all under grass. About 6 acres of this was originally arable, in two lots. They were let to two farmers under special conditions for their being laid down, the landlord finding manure and seed. The cost of this was—

						£	s.	d.
Seed	...	...	...	...	...	9	14	0
Manure	...	...	...	...	...	18	5	5
						<hr/>		
						£27	19	5

There is no separate charge for interest on this amount, and the interest must therefore be debited to the increase in rent. But in another two years the leases will have run out, when higher rents will be received, as the land will then be good pasture, and is close to the village.

The whole cost of conversion can therefore be given as follows :

						£	s.	d.
Draining	...	...	...	...	...	15	10	0
Laying down to grass	...	...	...	...	...	27	19	5
Fencing	...	...	...	...	...	2	11	0
Hedging	...	...	...	...	...	1	15	0
						<hr/>		
						£47	15	5

The grass fields are watered naturally, or are without water.

The farm lies adjacent to the village of Cefn-y-bedd, and is, therefore, conveniently situated as regards the housing of the occupiers. In each case the land is used as an adjunct to other professions, or by men holding other land. The men on the three smaller lots keep milking-cows and make butter. One of them bought a small plot of land for £50, and put up his own house and buildings. Half of a large galvanized barn in the original farmyard was moved on to this man's holding.

Part of a stone barn on the farm has been converted into a laundry for the village. The total cost of plastering, etc., and putting in the stove and boiler amounted to £50 17s. 6d.

*Cwymdylan Farm, Llangammarch Wells.*

Total acreage, 99·325.

Rent and tithe as a whole farm, £44 17s.

Forty acres of this was let in small holdings from March, 1895. Then, in 1903, the original tenant died, who had retained the other half, and the whole farm was let out. See table on opposite page.

In every instance the occupier pays rates.

The farmhouse, which was not much more than a cottage, is let separately to a labourer who has no land. A wool-dealer who has 13 acres of land has the buildings, except the pigs' cot. A

# PARTITION OF CWYMDYLAN FARM 281

Profession of Occupier.			Acreage.	Rent.		
				£	s.	d.
Hotelkeeper	...	...	15·477	28	0	0
Butcher	...	...	4·299	5	10	0
Saddler	...	...	6·486	6	10	0
Wool-dealer	...	...	12·961	19	0	0
			(and buildings)			
Labourer	...	...	Farmhouse and pigs' cot	6	0	0
Grocer and farmer	...	...	26·568	22	15	2
Grocer and farmer	...	...	Barn	1	0	0
Mason	...	...	12·531	6	0	0
Innkeeper	...	...	4·348	6	0	0
Independent sporting tenant	...	...	5	6	10	4
Occupied by owner (part of this = sites and ground attached to two bungalows; part = plantations)			11·655			
			<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
			99·325	107	5	6
Less original rent	...	...	...	44	17	0
				<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Increase in rent	...	...	...	£62	8	6

large barn is let separately for £1 to another tenant of 31 acres.

Another barn has been converted into a cottage, of which particulars will be given later.

The land, which is all grass, except two arable fields which the tenant prefers to keep as arable, lies on either side the road leading from the village of Llangammarch Wells to the mineral spring, near which a large hotel has been built and lodging-houses have sprung up.

As will be seen from the list, the tenants are all

local tradesmen or innkeepers, and use the land in connection with their occupations.

In this case, again, the cost of adaptation has been small; £36 was spent in fencing and building cow-houses, and £133 on draining. In both cases 5 per cent. interest is received on the outlay over and above the sum received for rent.

The figures given as increase of rent can therefore be looked upon as a net yearly profit on the transaction. It should be admitted, however, that £1,500 has been laid out in the immediate district in putting up bungalow cottages, etc., with a view to attracting visitors to the place. Indirectly, this has its effect on letting the land at a good price, by adding to the prosperity of the village tradespeople and innkeepers, who figure largely as the new tenants.

On this farm, as mentioned above, a stone barn has been converted at small cost into a good workman's cottage. The inside measure was 38 feet 5 inches by 17 feet. The ceiling joists have been put in at 9 feet, and the place divided into a kitchen, pantry, and three bedrooms. The dividing walls where there are chimney-stacks are built of brick; the other dividing walls are of matchboards. Each bedroom has a fireplace.

The total cost has been £70, of which £30 is due to material and £40 to labour. The cottage will be let at £6.

## WATER-SUPPLY.

On each farm Mr. Bligh has erected a windmill for supplying water, but this has not been done for the purpose of the small holdings. Only one small holding on Cwymdylan gets water in this way, and not one at all on Cefn-y-bedd.

At Cefn-y-bedd the windmill pumps out of a storage-tank fed by a spring into a supply-tank of 5,000 gallons. The tanks are brick, cemented over.

This mill cost £190 15s. 5d. It supplies the laundry and fourteen houses, which are charged a total of £6 2s. 6d. per annum for the water.

At Cwymdylan £240 was spent on the water-supply. The charge for water in dwellings owned by Mr. Bligh is included in the rent, and others are charged at the rate of 7s. 6d. for cottages up to £2 for houses. The charge is at the same rate at Cefn-y-bedd.

Mr. Bligh's undertaking is particularly interesting as representing a certain aspect of this question—viz., what can be done for his own benefit, in an apparently hopeless country for small holdings, by a landlord who gives his mind to the question and considers it *on an economic basis only*.

The district at first sight would seem most unfavourable for any undertaking of this kind: the climate is backward, the land poor and exposed; there are no special local industries, etc., which would make a small holding valuable as an adjunct to fall back upon. The type of farming of the

district is unsuitable for conducting on a small scale; in fact, as has been pointed out, Mr. Bligh considers the type of farm in this district which lets for under £30 per annum a most uneconomic one. Any universal creation of small holdings, therefore, or any creation not carried out in accordance with the local demand, such as it is, would probably be disastrous under present conditions.

Also any experiment necessitating a large outlay on buildings, fencing, etc., would prove unremunerative.

Mr. Bligh, however, was aware of a certain demand amongst the village people for small quantities of land, and ascertained that this demand was sufficient to make the economic price from the small holder's point of view an economic one from the landlord's.

By merely supplying this local demand he has increased his yearly rental on the two farms at the rate of 64 per cent. net. At the same time the village people, being enabled to keep their own cows and grow stuff for their horses kept in connection with other business, can carry on this business at a greater profit to themselves.

The following points were in favour of the success, from a financial point of view, which has attended this partition of farms:

1. The land was conveniently situated close to a village, adjacent to, or at a very short distance from, the homes of the people requiring land.

2. The necessary outlay on buildings was very small. In each case the original farm buildings have accommodated two tenants. The tenant of one holding at Cefn-y-bedd, as already mentioned, has put up his own house and buildings on an adjoining plot which the landlord has sold him. In some cases sufficient buildings already existed or were built on the man's own premises, or the premises occupied by him.

3. There was very little fencing required, the land for the most part being let in already existing fields.

4. As regards water-supply, the interest on the capital spent in erecting windmills was paid for by outsiders using the water. On the two farms only one field was supplied by a windmill ; the other fields were naturally watered or had no water.

It may be argued by some that this is not the creation of small holdings proper, and that it is merely a case of letting accommodation land. It is, however, immaterial what it is called. The point is that small people wanting land for economic reasons have been supplied with it on an economic basis—viz., with profit to the landlord.

It will probably also be argued that this is not supplying the *bona fide* agriculturist with land, and that it is merely helping village tradespeople who were getting along all right before. The answer to this is that the acquisition of a small piece of land in every case greatly increases their prosperity, which must react on the prosperity of the district.

And if this district happens to be a poor one, from the point of view of the small agriculturist proper, this connection of the land with other trades is the only way to get hold of its greatest possible value.

There are such a very large number of places in England where similar undertakings would be of the greatest benefit, both to landlord and tenant, that Mr. Bligh's experience in the matter, which he has kindly placed at the disposal of anyone interested in it, is of the greatest value in showing what can be done in apparently unfavourable districts ; and this, moreover, not on philanthropic, but on purely business lines.

#### SMALL HOLDINGS ON THE ESTATE OF MR. FRYER, OF VERWOOD, WIMBORNE.

Mr. Fryer's estate of 1,850 acres lies in the parish of Verwood, on the borders of Hampshire and Dorset.

There is only one large farm of 200 acres on the estate, and there are three commons, comprising 1,012 acres, on which the tenants turn out cattle and sheep. Otherwise the whole estate is held in small holdings, of which there are forty under 5 acres and thirty-six under 50 acres. The greater number of these were formed originally from



moorland enclosures, the tenants paying a rent of 10s., and getting the land into cultivation with the understanding that the rent will not be raised. The average rent per acre of good land is £1. A seventy years' lease is granted to anyone wishing to build, under the following conditions :

No cottage to have less than three bedrooms. If built of 'mud,' there must be a brick or stone foundation not less than 12 inches above the ground. The rooms on the ground-floor to be not less than 8 feet high, and on the bedroom-floor not less than 7 feet.

The houses put up by the people themselves are nearly all 'mud'—*i.e.*, a stone and clay mixture commonly used for building in the district. A house with the accommodation mentioned in the conditions of the lease would cost about £70 to £80, if the materials can be dug on the spot and the man contributes his own labour and carting. In nearly every case the smaller men have put up their own cottages.

#### CHARACTER OF HOLDINGS.

The holdings are all much of the same kind, situated round the edge of the commons, where the animals are turned out to graze. This enables the few acres of pasture to be all shut up for hay. As a rule, two or three cows are kept, and a large number of pigs and poultry. Sufficient corn and roots are grown for food and litter for the stock, and the rest of the ground will be given up to

## 288 TYPE OF HOLDINGS—MARKETS

growing peas, early potatoes, and other vegetables for the Bournemouth Market.

The larger proportion of the men are now living entirely on their holdings ; but in nearly every case they had started with a small piece of land while still working regularly for wages, and gradually added to it until they had enough stock or capital to work an acreage which would support them and their families, when they would give up their former professions. It seems possible to make a living on 7 or 8 acres where there are common rights and part of the land is devoted to market-gardening.

### DISPOSAL OF PRODUCE.

Every man has his pony and cart, with which he takes his stuff fourteen miles by road to Bournemouth once or twice a week. The produce is mostly sold to shops, and a few hawk their stuff round to private customers. Some of the men buy up the produce of the very small holdings where no horse is kept. Most of the garden produce, butter, and poultry goes to Bournemouth.

The other markets for stock, etc., are Poole (fourteen miles) and Wimborne (eight miles).

The nearest station, Verwood, is on a branch line of the London and South-Western Railway running from Salisbury to Wimborne, and is not of much use in connecting with the best markets.

## SOIL.

The land is decidedly poor, taking it as a whole. In the best parts it is a clayey loam, but for the most part it is light—sand and gravel, with occasional pockets of clay. Moreover, it often lies on a hard, black rock, known locally as ‘callus,’ the surface of which has to be broken up to get percolation of moisture.

The holdings have at some time or other been reclaimed from open moorland, and made profitable by heavy manuring and thorough cultivation.

## TYPICAL HOLDINGS.

One man holding 7 acres had been a bricklayer with some acres of reclaimed moorland, on which he had built a house. He lost the use of an eye and had to give up his profession. He then turned some of his corn land into a market-garden, and is doing extremely well, selling fruit and vegetables in Bournemouth. He keeps besides a few cows for making butter, and rears a large number of pigs.

Another man had been a sawyer, and started with a few acres. He brought up ten children, and now holds 13 acres, on which he and his wife and four grown-up children, including a married son, find employment sufficient for a living. He keeps two cows, several pigs, and grows enough keep for them and the horse. Off the rest of the

ground he takes two large loads of produce to Bournemouth every week.

A man with only 14 acres was making an entire living on agricultural crops and stock alone. He kept a big head of sheep, which was, of course, only made possible by the right of running them on the common.

On one holding of the same description a man had brought up four sons, three of whom had worked their way up to large farms, and one succeeded him on the small holding. One of the brothers had taken a farm of 100 acres, where four farmers had failed in succession, and was making it a success. The one large farmer on Mr. Fryer's estate, holding 200 acres, was one of a large family brought up on a small holding. While still a boy working at home he had saved up enough to buy a sheep, which he turned out on the common. Later on he took a field, and was able, in course of time, by gradually adding to his stock, to set himself up, without help, on a farm of 40 acres.

There are numerous instances of what these men will do for themselves if the chance is given them of getting the land.

A jobbing labourer took 7 or 8 acres of moorland and built his own house. Now he has put up four houses, which he lets for a good rent, and is known to have saved a good deal of money.

Another man in a small way took some land on a fourteen years' lease for brick-making. He has

done remarkably well, and employs now a large amount of labour, which adds to the prosperity of the district.

#### LOCAL INDUSTRIES.

There are various small local industries, which no doubt are an important factor in assisting the possibilities of small holdings.

The making of pottery was carried on to a large extent before the introduction of enamel ware. Many of the men now living entirely on their holdings had started life with potteries. The work still gives employment to a number of hands, both in making the ware and hawking it about. The manufacture of brooms is another considerable industry. Many of the men make a living on a few acres of land with this as a supplement; and employment is given to others in buying up the manufactured brooms and hawking them all round the country. A few acres of land to grow corn and litter for their ponies, and produce a certain amount of their own food, is an especial benefit to this class of men, who have their holdings to fall back upon for employment in between.

The heather for broom-making is cut in the New Forest, and has to be carted eight or nine miles. The brooms are sold by the makers at 1s. 6d. to 2s. a dozen, the retailers getting 2s. 6d. to 3s. a dozen.

A broom-maker on 3 acres of land at £1 an acre had built his own house, and saved enough to

put up another house on his land, which he let for £10.

The women and children are able to earn a good deal in the winter by knitting. It is in this district that the 'Ringwood' gloves are largely manufactured. The shops supply the wool and take back the finished articles.

On examining into the conditions which make it possible for the men not only to maintain themselves on a small acreage, but be able to save money and put up their own houses, one is first of all struck by the inherent qualities of the local people in the way of thrift and industry, and the use they make of all the opportunities which the circumstances of the district allow them.

These opportunities can be summarized as follows:

1. The excellent outlet afforded by Bournemouth for garden and dairy produce.

2. The common rights, enabling a large head of stock to be kept per acre, and, above all, giving young men at home an opportunity to start owning stock of their own before they are in a position to take land.

3. The local industries, which form an appreciable addition to the family earnings.

4. The opportunity that exists for acquiring small bits of land at a fairly low rent, the knowledge of which I have observed invariably acts as a powerful incentive towards habits of thrift and industry.

An important factor in the successful working of

these holdings, which I have also noticed in many other districts, is that the men gradually work their way up from small beginnings, a process which tends to a natural weeding out of the unfit. They undertake no more work than they can manage themselves with their families, and do not embark on ventures for which they are not sure of the capital. They grow the greater part of their own food, have no wages to pay, and give that personal attention to details which, in agriculture, is a fundamental necessity.

### SMALL HOLDINGS ON THE ESTATE OF MR. G. E. B. EYRE IN THE NEW FOREST.

Mr. Eyre's estate is in the parishes of Bramshaw and Cadman in the New Forest.

The total acreage, excluding common land, is 2,700. This is divided up into sixty-eight holdings, of which the largest is 83 acres and the smallest 1 acre.

There are 18 holdings of 6 acres and under.

20	„	12½	„	„
7	„	20	„	„
14	„	50	„	„
9	„	over 50 and under 84.		

## DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL HOLDINGS ON THE ESTATE.

Mr. Eyre came into the property in 1887.

At that time there was a difficulty in letting large farms, on which agricultural depression had been felt to a greater extent than on the smaller ones. The value of ordinary agricultural land had gone down one half, whereas the smaller holdings maintained a high average value.

Mr. Eyre therefore adapted himself to the evident requirements of the district by subdividing the larger farms in a way which would meet the local demands of the population. As in so doing he was only reverting to the original conditions of the district, he was able to do a good deal by merely adding land, already fenced in small plots, to existing cottages, and by the adaptation of existing buildings. The increased rental received in this way he regards as a sufficient interest on the capital expenditure needed, and he looks upon the undertaking as having been the only means of maintaining the value of his property. He, moreover, attaches importance to the fact that a better class of tenants have been thus secured on the estate—the type of men who not only are never in arrears with the rent, but amongst whom drunkenness and idleness, with their accompanying evils, are at a minimum.



### SPECIAL AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT.

Taking the New Forest district as a whole, we find it differing from the ordinary rural districts of England, in that the existence of forest and common rights make a larger number of small holdings possible than is usually the case. Hence the demand for them has always been high enough to maintain, if not increase, the value of land in small lots during a time when the value of large farms was steadily decreasing and their proper cultivation was appreciably declining.

### DESCRIPTION OF FOREST RIGHTS IN CONNECTION WITH SMALL HOLDINGS.

The rights are those of pasture, fuel, and pannage, and are attached to the holdings, going either with the house or land. Anyone acquiring a holding acquires also the common rights attached to it.

There are 43,000 acres in the New Forest of open heath land over which the commoners have the right of turning out ponies, cattle, sheep, and pigs. This enables them to live on a smaller acreage than would otherwise be possible.

### SIZE OF HOLDINGS.

The ordinary cottage holdings average about 6 acres. On these the men earn extra wages, as a rule by carting, higgling, etc.

Twelve acres are considered sufficient for an entire living. Many Forest men consider this the maximum size that can be profitably worked with the aid of the family only.

The size of the Forest holdings is important. Here, as elsewhere, experience has shown that there is a certain acreage which is specially adapted to local requirements. In this case the size of the holdings is regulated in the case of—

1. Cottage holdings, by the amount of stock the wife and family can manage while the husband is out at work ;

2. Small farms, by the amount of land a man can cultivate himself with the family, without having hired labour.

As the sons grow up, a bigger farm can be worked while they remain at home. But the sons marry and go on to little places of their own, and the shrewdest Forest men are content when they get to 12 acres. They consider that there is more profit to be got out of this acreage by working the Forest in connection with it than could be made on a larger farm without common rights.

Labourers without land, having rights attached to their cottages, can also turn out stock on the common. In this way they accumulate stock or capital until such time as they have an opportunity to take land. I have been told that it is a common thing for labourers to double their wages in this way. It also enables grown-up sons, living at home and working for wages, to get a start. The

system is invaluable as an incentive to thrift and industry, forming, as it does, a stepping-stone for men who would otherwise have little chance of ultimately getting on to the land.

#### TYPE OF FARMING.

The land is mostly in pasture, which can all be mown for hay when the animals are turned out. A strip of land is devoted to growing roots, cabbage, etc., for winter use, and on the cottage holdings is cultivated by spade labour. On the larger holdings about one-quarter is arable, and the rule is to consume all the produce grown.

The stock kept are ponies, milking-cows, young cattle, and pigs. The brood mares are either run all the year round on the Forest, or are wintered at a cost of 1s. to 1s. 6d. a week. The yearling colts are sold for from £4 to £5. The Forest breed of cows is very hardy: they live through the summer mainly on the heather and rough grass of the heath lands, and are fairly good milkers for their size. Their chief merit lies in the cheapness of their living. Butter is made, and the heifer calves reared. A labourer without land can turn a yearling out on the Forest, and sell it at calving for a good profit, the cost of maintenance having only been about 50s. for winter keep. Pigs are very largely kept, and supply most of the manure on the smaller holdings.

The chief feature of all the holdings is the large

head of stock kept. On one holding of 20 acres, typical of many others, there were fourteen head of cattle (of which seven were milking-cows, four heifers, and three yearlings), one horse, and four brood sows. The young pigs were sold or fattened according to current prices of meal or stock. Four acres were in roots and oats, and the whole of the rest of the land had been mown for hay. The tenant, who paid £2 an acre rent, had started life working for 11s. a week, and had never received more than 16s. up to the time he had taken this holding. He had, however, been able to pay £70 down for the valuation of the stock on the premises when starting.

Another man, now farming 50 acres, had begun at 1s. 6d. a day, working with his father in the woods. He saved up enough to buy a calf when a boy, which he turned out on the Forest, and gradually increased his stock. Then he took a small place with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres, and from there went on to one of 15 acres, when he gave up working for wages. After some years he was able to take his present farm, which he worked with two of his sons. He had brought up a family of thirteen children, and had set up one son as a market-gardener and another as a farmer. He was of opinion that anyone could save on agricultural wages if they had sufficient inducement.

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### SMALL FARMS WITHOUT FOREST RIGHTS.

While most of the holdings on this estate are worked in connection with forest rights, several of the farms that have been divided are further removed from the Forest, and carry no rights. A larger acreage is necessary for a living in these cases, and, though the results are not in every case so satisfactory, they fully justify the policy of subdivision. One large farm had been cut up by adding the outlying fields to contiguous holdings; a new house and buildings had been put up for 30 acres, and the portion of the land round the original farmhouse retained as another holding.

The occupier of the 30 acres was a native of the Forest district, but had been a gardener all his life. He worked the place with two sons of fourteen and fifteen, and had extra help at harvest time. He had 4 acres of wheat and 2 of roots. He kept nine milking-cows, and sold butter to private customers. Besides four breeding sows, he had a very large number of fattening pigs, which he sold to a local butcher on certain dates, sometimes supplying him with as many as forty at once. He also grew peas for Southampton Market.

### BENEFIT OF COMMON RIGHTS IN CONNECTION WITH SMALL HOLDINGS.

On visiting holdings such as the last one described of the more normal type of ordinary agricultural

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districts, after having seen those worked in connection with Forest rights, one could not but be struck by the difference in the greater economical working of the land as displayed in the latter type. The large stacks of hay on the Forest holdings, where practically all the land had been mown, ensured an amount of winter keep for a head of stock which it would not be possible to winter on the larger holdings; and at the time of my visit the abundant aftermath on the several small fields contrasted with the bared pastures of the farms where the cattle could not be turned out on common land. There is no doubt that where common land exists it enables the bordering cultivated area to be made the very best use of by a large number of small men, and that any system of afforestation which would lead to enclosing large tracts would mean ruin to a population who are under the present system getting the greatest value out of this so-called waste land; and they are, moreover, enabled to live well on an acreage which could not otherwise possibly support them.

### PRICE OF LAND, RENT, ETC.

The average price per acre for land sold in small lots is about £40. In some cases for very small plots £90 and £100 has been realized. For large plots the average price is £20 to £25 for land which would have fetched double that price twenty years ago. It is noticeable that there has been no cor-

responding fall in the value of smaller holdings. The average rent for the larger farms is from 12s. to 18s. an acre; for those between 20 and 100 acres, 25s. to 30s.; for the smaller holdings, £2, tithe free. The tenant pays rates and taxes.

#### WAGES OF DISTRICT, ETC.

Regular farm-labourers receive 10s. to 11s. a week, with extra harvest money; stockmen, etc., get up to 15s.; 2s. 6d. and 3s. a day is paid for odd days' work.

For the small holders doing jobwork there is a certain amount of labour in the woods, carting and roadwork; and where a number of small men are collected together there is always work for some of them as higglers.

#### EVIDENCES OF PROSPERITY AMONGST SMALL HOLDERS IN THE DISTRICT.

No better evidences of prosperity could be wished for than the instances of results obtained by small holders known to Mr. Eyre, and given by him in his evidence before the Royal Commission on Agricultural Depression.

I cannot do better than quote a few examples from this source:

*'Results of Stock-Keeping on a House Plot and One Acre of Land with Common Rights.*—The occupier, an agricultural labourer in regular em-

ployment at from 9s. to 12s. a week, and having a family of ten children, was able in middle life to take a little place of 12 acres. A son succeeded to the old home at twenty-five years of age, and married. After seven years he has taken a little place of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  acres.

*‘Results of Stock-Keeping on a Four-and-a-Half-Acre Holding with Forest Rights.*—The freeholder estimates that he has made £30 annually by his forest rights for more than twenty years, and has thus recovered the original cost of his freehold.

*‘Results of Stock-Keeping on a Six-Acre Holding with Forest Rights.*—Stock: three cows, one heifer, one calf. Stock bought in: twenty-four pigs. After charging labour hired for haymaking, emptying pens and sties, and for all rough work, the maximum net profit in a single year was £77 5s. 11d., and the minimum net profit £59.’

Mr. Eyre also compiled for his evidence before the Commission a statement of the number of depositors in the Post Office Savings Bank in the New Forest district, and the amount to their credit. This return shows a proportion of one in four of depositors to the population, the general proportion for England and Wales being one in five.

The average amount to each depositor’s credit is £17 7s. 11d., the average amount for England and Wales being £14 12s. 2d. There is very little poverty in the district. The poor relief granted is



to very old people or widows, and there are many cases of this latter class of people being able to support themselves partially in cottages to which forest rights are attached.

While driving through the neighbourhood with Mr. Eyre, he pointed out many small freeholds where the former occupying tenants were able to pay up to £100 an acre, cash down, when a chance occurred for them to acquire the freehold of their old homes. Here, side by side with the old mud cottages of original squatters, substantial cottages or buildings had been erected by their present owners.

Reviewing this estate as a whole, one is chiefly struck by it as an instance of what a landlord can do when his property is of such a size that he can have a personal knowledge of all details connected with it. This necessarily demands a knowledge of the established local agricultural conditions, and by making it his business to keep in touch with these conditions and adapt his estate to them, the benefits to himself and his tenants are mutual. Mr. Eyre has introduced no new ideas, nor tried to impose methods which are foreign to the class of people he is dealing with. He has simply recognized what was wanted to prevent the extermination of a thrifty, independent race of men, who, if they were not deprived of the small pieces of land which were necessary to enable them to use their inherited knowledge, might be trusted to work out their own salvation.

Ancient records and present-day landmarks show that this district was originally one of small holdings. Consolidation into larger farms took place at the time when this policy became general in the middle of the century. As in other places, it failed. The large farms were badly cultivated from want of capital, their selling value fell one half, and there was some difficulty in letting them. But the remaining small holdings meanwhile held their way, and were not affected by agricultural depression to any great extent. Small holdings were high-priced and high-rented.

As a consequence of realizing the situation and adapting himself to it, Mr. Eyre has contributed his share in saving to the country a race of men who would otherwise have died out, as they have died elsewhere, and who would have been replaced by a type of farmer who, with ordinary methods of farming, with no understanding of how to work the Forest, would not have made the land yield to its uttermost, as it is doing at present. There is no philanthropy about this—it is business; and while benefiting this race of small holders, Mr. Eyre has prevented the fall in value of his own property, which would have otherwise inevitably taken place.

These reports do not pretend to do more than give a very general idea of the amount of success attending certain endeavours, on the part of a few landowners, to deal with this question without the expenditure of much capital. They give illustra-

tions of cases where landowners have been able, by fostering small holdings, to keep up the value of their estates, and continue to realize the same income during a time of falling rents: of how one landlord increased his net income 64 per cent., and of how another developed his estate, and got much waste land into profitable cultivation by merely allowing small men access to the land on reasonable terms.

In the case of Verwood, it is specially to be noted that the men required no assistance of any kind, even providing their own housing accommodation.

## HOUSING AND BUILDINGS.

It is generally this question of housing and buildings which proves the stumbling-block to action on the part of landowners who are otherwise anxious to encourage smaller tenants. The above reports will give indications of how it is often possible, by adaptation, to do a good deal without necessarily providing new buildings, and so to contribute in an appreciable degree to keeping on the land the men already there.

It must be realized, however, that as the number of holders increases, the housing question must be more seriously faced. Where small-holding experiments have been tried there are innumerable cases to prove that, given reasonable facilities, small men are perfectly capable of dealing with their own housing, and in a satisfactory manner. By

reasonable facilities, I mean absence of unnecessary and hindering by-laws, and advantageous leasing conditions where it is not a question of freeholds.

One of the strongest arguments brought forward by those who favour a system of land purchase rather than one of tenancy is that the former system removes the difficulties which exist in connection with any form of lease where a man wishes to put up his own buildings. Those landlords who are averse to any scheme of peasant ownership might profitably consider whether they could not remove one of the chief arguments in its favour if they could see their way to adopting more generally a system of building leases. Their chief objection is no doubt the risk of being ultimately left with a heap of ruins on their hands. This fear is largely based on the object-lessons presented by the present state of ancient small freeholds, which are a survival of more prosperous days. Where, however, the conditions of the district have been favourable to the continual success of the small holder, we find these men not only keeping their houses in proper repair, but building irreproachable new ones. For instance, in the New Forest district it is not uncommon to see the old mud cottages of the original squatters used as farm-buildings by their descendants, who have erected new brick houses alongside.

While discussing the question of building, a word might be said on the present system of

expensive and elaborate building in vogue on most large estates.

The chief idea seems to be to erect model buildings of a substantial character, which will prove assets for unborn heirs, and the amount of capital thus invested naturally does not yield an economic return. Landlords, therefore, rightly argue that when they create small holdings it is philanthropy, or the pleasure derived from a model estate, but that it is not business, and cannot be afforded by a relatively poor owner. But is it always economic to put buildings up for eternity? A wooden shed on brick foundations and a galvanized iron roof would give many a small man the opportunity of developing the resources of his plot of land, and need not necessarily be an eyesore. It can be done on an economic basis if the holding is of a sufficient acreage to admit of the interest on the outlay being obtained on the increased rent of the land.

Some fifty years ago, when agriculture on a large scale was much advocated, a policy of consolidating large farms was pursued, and enormous sums were spent in erecting time-enduring houses and buildings on a vast scale for the use of the big farmer. In the course of my recent investigations throughout England, I have times without number found these large farms mere 'white elephants' to the present owners, who are obliged either to farm them themselves (when they generally lose) or to let them at a very low rental, which certainly does not represent

interest on their capital outlay. Moreover, as no tenant farmer has sufficient capital for such large undertakings, the land is let down in value. Small farms in the same neighbourhood are sought after, and maintain their former rentals, and if these larger ones could be cut up they would let well. But the capital has been sunk, and though it lies there, yielding no return, there is no more forthcoming to adapt the place to the requirements of changed times. It would be interesting to work out in these cases whether a lesser outlay at the start on less permanent buildings would not have yielded such an interest during the boom as would now justify putting these buildings on the scrap-heap, and have left more capital available for adapting the land to those conditions which, under changed times, fetch the highest interest. It may be a question to consider whether it is not best to meet the needs of the generation in which we are living, and adapt our methods to the benefit of the greatest number of those around us, and leave the future free, with all its vast possibilities of inventions and changed conditions of life, to those who come after us, instead of sinking capital in a way which may or may not benefit them.

## LETTING THROUGH LOCAL AUTHORITIES OR ASSOCIATIONS.

Another point which deters land-agents, if not landowners, from encouraging smaller holdings is the extra trouble and the supposed extra risk of collecting rent from a number of smaller, and presumably less solvent, men than the farmer class.

As regards the latter point, on the estates just described, as well as in other undertakings not here considered, it is unanimously stated that the little men are found to pay more regularly and punctually than the larger farmers. It is their universal practice to pay on the actual date that their rent falls due, whereas it is well known that the larger farmers expect, almost as a right, a certain term of grace.

If the landowner feels deterred from undertaking any scheme on account of the extra labour involved, he may still consider whether he could not further the object in view by allowing the Parish Council or a Small Holdings Association to take the land and be responsible for the whole rent to him.

- By charging the subtenants a very slightly increased rent, the Council or Association can obtain a sum sufficient to cover the expense of rent-collecting, as well as such outgoings as fencing, repairs, etc.

Examples of how this works out in practice can

be seen in the case of the Parish Councils of Belbroughton, near Birmingham, and in the case of the Small Holdings Association on Lord Carrington's land in Lincolnshire.

Part of the land held by the Belbroughton Parish Council is a farm of 35 acres, on which the former tenant had failed to pay any rent for two years, and had got the land into very bad condition. The Council have taken it on a yearly tenancy, on the understanding that they will not be disturbed during the present owner's lifetime. They pay a higher rent than that at which the farm was originally let, and have repaired all the hedges, gates, and fencing out of the fund obtained by subletting it to the twenty tenants at a slightly higher rent, paid in advance, than that which the landowner receives. The land is already in a very much better state of cultivation. By this arrangement it will be noticed that the landowner runs no risk, the Council as a body being responsible for the rent; that he has no more trouble than if the land was let to one farmer; and that, considering the bad state in which the farm was taken over, far more has been done in the way of repairs than could have been expected of a new incoming tenant farmer.

The Lincolnshire Small Holdings Association leases two farms, of 250 and 265 acres respectively, from Lord Carrington, in the neighbourhood of Spalding. Some isolated fields bring the total acreage hired in this way up to 650, on which



there are about 200 tenants. One of the original farmhouses has been adapted to hold two of the tenants, and the buildings in each case have been divided off with post-and-rail fencing to accommodate the tenants holding the largest acreage. The Association pays Lord Carrington's rent, undertakes the fencing, ditching, etc., and the expenses of management, and pays the rates.

The tenants are charged a somewhat higher rent to cover these items; but even this rent is lower than the current one for land in small plots in the neighbourhood.

At the annual gathering of the Association in 1904 it was stated that, in spite of the bad season just experienced, the Association had collected during the last two years from their tenantry £2,690, and of that sum they had lost only £1 13s., while only £7 10s. was still due as recoverable arrears. One of the farms had at that time been let in this way for nine years, and a new lease for twenty-one years had just been arranged.

#### THE CREATION OF SMALL HOLDINGS BY LANDLORDS ON BORROWED CAPITAL: LORD HARROWBY'S EVI- DENCE.

So far we have been considering the question of what may be done in many cases by landowners without the expenditure of much capital.

The Report recently issued by the Departmental Committee appointed by the Board of Agriculture in 1905 recommends the granting of State loans to landowners, for the purpose of voluntarily creating small holdings on their estates. The loans would be similar to those granted under the Public Money Drainage Act of 1846, and would be subject to such restrictions as would ensure the retention of the land as a small holding during the time that any of the loan remained unpaid.

Without going into the arguments for or against this proposal, I should like to call attention to some interesting evidence given by the Earl of Harrowby, bearing on the possibility of landowners creating small holdings on an economic basis with borrowed money.

Lord Harrowby stated that he had 703 acres in small holdings on his Staffordshire property. They are mostly grass, and are held by men working on the estate or for farmers.

In Gloucestershire he has 224 acres in small holdings, and 94 acres in allotments. Here the holdings are arable or mixed. The crops grown are chiefly wheat, potatoes, beans, and vegetables. The men combine their work on the land with other employment, such as hauling, fruit-picking, jobbing for farmers, working on the road, etc.

Lord Harrowby lays special stress on their good farming and punctual payments. He never knew a small holder in arrears.

Taking grass holdings or mixed arable and grass

farms—the type most difficult to create because of the outlay necessary on buildings—he contends that the higher rent received from the smaller men profitably recoups the expense of creation when these holdings are 10 acres or over. He takes the following facts as a basis for this calculation: That the cost of house and buildings for ten to twenty acres is £400, including fences; that the money is borrowed from the Lands Improvement Company at  $5\frac{1}{8}$  per cent. (4 per cent. interest and  $1\frac{1}{8}$  per cent. for redemption in forty years); that the small man can afford to pay £1 an acre more than that paid by the larger farmer. He handed in the following:

‘SCHEME BY WHICH LANDOWNERS CAN CREATE SMALL HOLDINGS OVER A CERTAIN ACREAGE AT NO LOSS TO THEMSELVES BY BORROWING MONEY FROM THE LANDS IMPROVEMENT COMPANY AT  $5\frac{1}{8}$  PER CENT. FOR FORTY YEARS.

The Government lending money to the landowners at 4 per cent., including interest and redemption, in forty years would enable them—

1. To reduce the rent to the small holder.
2. To minimize the loss on the smaller acreages.

Below are given a few actual cases on the Earl of Harrowby's estates:

*Case 1.—Arable Holding, Five Acres.*

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Rent from farmer at 30s. ...				7	10	0
Rent from small holder at 50s. ...	12	10	0			
Rent from small holder's cottage ...	6	0	0	18	10	0
Difference in rent (gain) ...				£11	0	0

Cost of homestead :

Cottage	...	...	...	...	£300	} £350
Buildings	...	...	...	...	£50	

A. £350 at $5\frac{1}{8}$ per cent. (Lands Improvement loan)	...	...	...	...	£	s.	d.
						17	18 9
B. £350 at 4 per cent. (Government loan)	...					14	0 0

A loses £6 18s. 9d. per annum.

B loses £3 per annum.

*Case 2.—Mixed Holding or Grass Farm, Ten to Twenty Acres (take Fifteen Acres for Calculation).*

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Rent from farmer at 30s. ...	...			22	10	0
Rent from small holder at 50s. ...	37	10	0			
Rent from small holder's cottage ...	6	0	0	43	10	0
Gain in rent ...	...	...		£21	0	0

Cost of homestead :

Cottage	...	...	...	...	£300	} £400
Buildings	...	...	...	...	£100	

A. £400 at $5\frac{1}{8}$ per cent. (Lands Improvement loan)	...	...	...	...	£	s.	d.
						20	10 0
B. £400 at 4 per cent. (Government loan)	...					16	0 0

A gains 10s. per annum.

B gains £5 per annum.

*Case 3.—Mixed Holding or Grass Farm, Twenty to Fifty Acres (take Forty Acres for Calculation).*

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Rent from farmer at 30s. ...	...			60	0	4
Rent from small holder at 40s. ...	80	0	0			
Rent from cottage ...	6	0	0	86	0	0
Gain in rent ...	...	...		£26	0	0

Cottage	...	...	...	...	£300	} £500
Buildings	...	...	...	...	£200	

B. £500 at 4 per cent. (Government loan)	...	20	0	0
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B gains £6 per annum.'

On the basis of these figures it appears that holdings of 5 acres and under on which buildings are required can only be created at a loss. But it must be noticed that the price of the cottage is put at £300. Calculating in the same way on the basis of a £200 cottage, there would under the Government loan be a gain of £1 per annum. It may be argued that nothing is put down in these calculations for depreciation, etc. It will, however, be admitted that the gain in rent on the holdings of 10 acres and upwards allows for this. Further, Lord Harrowby puts the life of his cottages at one hundred years. By this scheme the loan is paid off in fifty years, when the only charge on the debit side will be the ordinary difference between the gross and net rental.

### THE NEED OF HELP FROM LAND-OWNERS.

It is hoped that the foregoing pages will serve as a slight indication of some of the lines on which it is possible for landowners, to their own advantage, to help individually in furthering the cause of small holdings, in spite of the seeming difficulties, which many vaguely believe are insuperable obstacles. In many cases these obstacles disappear in front of a wise handling of the subject, and adverse arguments which may be valid under certain conditions are not so universally applicable as they are often taken to be.

There is no doubt that if the landowning class, who are in the best position for acquiring that local knowledge so necessary for success, were to make this a more special subject for their consideration, many of the evils which are sometimes feared from schemes promoted under legislative action would be averted. In the next chapter I propose to deal with what has actually been accomplished by legislation since the passing of the Small Holdings Act in 1894.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CREATION OF SMALL HOLDINGS BY LEGISLATIVE ACTION.

THE Small Holdings Act of 1892, empowering County Councils to acquire land for the purposes of small holdings, followed on an inquiry into the subject held in 1889 by a Select Committee.

The main objects of this inquiry, as stated in the Report of the Committee, were 'to inquire into the facilities which exist for the creation of small holdings in land in Great Britain; whether, either in connection with an improved system of local government or otherwise, these facilities may be extended; whether in recent years there has been any diminution in the number of small owners and cultivators of land; and whether there is any evidence to show that such diminution is due to legislation.'

The conclusions arrived at by the Committee were summarized as follows:

1. That the extension of a system of small holdings is a matter of national importance, both in the interests of the rural population and also as adding to the security of property generally.

2. That the intervention of the Legislature is called for by the special circumstances of the case, and is justified by considerations affecting the well-being of the whole community.

3. That there has been, until quite recently, a considerable diminution both in small agricultural ownerships and tenancies.

4. That this diminution has been due—

A. In the case of small tenancies, chiefly to economic causes, and especially to the policy of consolidating farms, which prevailed largely until within the last few years, but has now practically ceased.

B. In the case of small ownerships, partly to economic causes, and especially to the low return for capital afforded by investment in land; and partly to the indirect effects of legislation, more especially of the laws of settlement and entail, and the law and practice of enclosures.

5. That no special facilities are afforded by existing legislation for the creation of small holdings.

6. That it is desirable that any system of small holdings should be graduated upwards from simple allotments or cottage gardens to farms of 50 acres or £50 in annual value.

7. That in order to meet the case of ordinary labourers, and to provide a ladder by which they may gradually raise themselves to the position of small owners, they recommend that in conjunction



with facilities for purchase the Local Authorities should have power to let land in small holdings not exceeding 10 acres.

8. That a system of ownership, however qualified, in the case of small holdings is preferable to any system of tenancy, except in the case of very small holdings.

9. That it is desirable to confer upon Local Authorities power to purchase land for the purpose of creating small cultivating ownerships, and to borrow the money from the Public Works Loan Commission.

10. That land in sufficient quantities for the purpose can be obtained by voluntary agreement, and that it is not necessary at present to resort to compulsory powers.

11. That it is essential that the purchasers of small holdings should provide in cash a proportion of the purchase money, not less than one-fifth or one-quarter of the whole.

12. That the balance of the purchase money, after payment of the proportion required in cash, should be lent by the Local Authority, at a rate of interest so arranged as to allow of its periodic reduction until it is reduced to a small proportion of the original charge, when it would remain as a perpetual feu or quit-rent of small amount.

13. That where small holdings are created by the Local Authority, subletting and subdivision of the holding should be prohibited.

14. That the Local Authority should have power at any time to resume possession of the land for public purposes or for building land, on payment of full compensation, based on its value as ~~an~~ agricultural occupation.

15. That any legislation on this subject should apply to the whole of Great Britain.

16. That in the first instance the advance of public money to Local Authorities for the purpose of creating small holdings should not exceed a total sum of £5,000,000, and that no Local Authority should be authorized to pledge the local rates for any sum which should involve an annual charge in the shape of interest and sinking fund exceeding 1d. in the £ on the rateable value of the district of such Local Authority.

In considering the subsequent legislation, which arose out of the findings of this Committee, one must remember that it is all in the nature of new and direct legislation on the top of our existing land laws. All the witnesses made very strong assertions as to the fact that present legislation as regards settlement, entail, primogeniture, and transfer tended to the aggregation of land in large quantities and increased the difficulty of obtaining it in a natural manner for small-holding purposes. Strong opinions were expressed that an alteration of the law in these respects would tend to subdivision of land apart from any direct legislation for this purpose. These sentiments were, either altogether or in part, so unanimously upheld by

every single witness examined on the point that they could not be entirely overlooked. It is interesting to note, however, that, in the summary of the Committee's conclusions, they content themselves with the insertion of half a clause acknowledging the fact that these causes had, with others, greatly tended to the decrease of small holdings.

There is not a single suggestion that any further inquiry need be held on this point.

All the suggestions made are in view of direct legislation to facilitate the creation of small holdings.

A study of the evidence shows that there is not a single dissentient voice as to the desirability, from every point of view, of increasing the number of small holdings. There are some, however, who object to legislative action in the matter, and these, while still advocating their extension, 'would like it left to the laws of supply and demand.'

There is a certain irony in the advice when the natural supply to the economic demand is, in so many cases, artificially withheld by the statute law of the country.

Let us now turn to a consideration of the practical use made of the evidence as regards framing the Act of 1892.

The following seem to be the chief points open to argument :

1. Whether the law should be framed to encourage occupying ownership or perpetual tenancy.

2. In the case of purchase on a deferred payment system, whether there should be a deposit of a part of the purchase money.

3. What authority should be entrusted with powers for increasing the supply of holdings.

4. Whether there should be compulsory powers for the acquisition of land.

#### OWNERSHIP OR TENANCY.

As regards the first two clauses, the chief—in fact, the only out-and-out supporter of a freehold system was Mr. Jesse Collings, who gave much interesting evidence in support of his Small Holdings Bill, which was then before Parliament. Under this Bill Local Authorities were to have power to acquire land, and divide it into small holdings for sale under the following terms: The purchasers were to find one-quarter of the purchase money, and the other three-quarters were to remain as a permanent loan, on which interest would be paid in the form of a perpetual quit-rent. The purchaser could sell or devise his holding subject to this quit-rent. By this means Mr. Collings contended that the ratepayers would be protected, first by the 25 per cent. deposit, and secondly by the presumably increased value of the land as a small holding; moreover, at the end of a certain term of years the ratepayers would be receiving a profit on the transaction; the State, being always the owner, could thus prevent subdivision and

subletting, the idea being to encourage a system of cultivating ownership rather than a race of impecunious small landlords; finally, mortgaging—the great evil of small holders—would not be possible, except as to the quarter of the value of the holding which had to be paid up.\*

To put the other side of the question, all the witnesses examined from the small-holding class were unanimously and strongly of opinion that the fact of having to pay a deposit would debar nearly the whole of the labouring class from making any use of the opportunities offered them to acquire land. While some of these witnesses looked upon ownership as the preferable form of holding, all agreed that tenancy was the most practicable. These opinions were equally strongly borne out by the witnesses from other classes whose professions, chiefly as agents, gave them an opportunity of judging the relative merits of the two sides to this question. They testified to the fact that there was more demand for tenancies than freeholds. Even Lord Wantage, the chairman of the Small Farm and Labourers' Land Company, who alone amongst the remaining witnesses strongly advocated small freeholds, admitted, however, that the payment of a deposit of 10 per cent. seemed to be a serious

\* Mr. Collings's Purchase of Land Bill now before Parliament differs essentially in two points: the Board of Agriculture is made the authority for the supply of holdings, and is empowered to advance the *whole* of the purchase money; the total repayment being spread over sixty-eight and a half years, when the purchasers become absolute owners.

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barrier to purchase in the case of the applications for land that the Company received ; that there had been a very great readiness to rent by the local people, and the few demands for purchase were from outsiders.

The chief reasons brought forward to support the above arguments were :

That ownership would tie the small holder to a particular holding when it might be to his advantage to move ; that any State assistance in the purchase of a holding necessitated restrictions for the prevention of reabsorption and mortgaging, which would give a feeling of cramped ownership, likely to mitigate his desire to purchase ; that, where a deposit had been made, there would be a danger of his forfeiting this money through not being able to keep up with the payments of the quit-rent, or through the land falling in value, so that the quit-rent would be a higher sum than the ordinary rent for land in the district. In the case of the sale of the holding under these circumstances the loss would be considerable. The deposit seemed necessary as a guarantee for the State ; on the other hand, it would shut out many thrifty, deserving men with large families, to whom it would be quite impossible to find more money than would stock and work the land. For these, therefore, a system of tenancy was the only feasible way.

Out of eighteen witnesses examined on this point eleven gave strong evidence against ownership, four

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thought it less practicable, and only three—viz., Mr. Jesse Collings, Lord Wantage, and Mr. Reid—were altogether for it. The Committee reported, however, that ‘they are of opinion that a system of ownership, however qualified, is preferable to any system of tenancy.’ Their reasons for this are given as follows :

That it would be safer for the ratepayers, owing to the payment of one-quarter of the purchase money.

That it would be hard for a public authority to avoid the losses incident to a landlord’s career ; they would have sternly to exact full rent in bad seasons, and would therefore compare unfavourably with private landowners.

That it was a stimulus to thrift and industry, and the only safe form of security for improvements.

That it lessened the difficulty as to provision of buildings, which, in the case of ownership, the small man would in course of time be able to provide for himself.

It was impossible for them, however, to overlook the very strong evidence that had been given on the deposit being a bar to deserving men ; a clause is therefore inserted recommending facilities for hiring up to 10 acres, and another stating the belief that the acceptance of this recommendation would be ‘essential to the completeness of any scheme for extending small holdings.’

AUTHORITY FOR THE SUPPLY OF SMALL  
HOLDINGS.

The other points of discussion with regard to subsequent legislation involved the question of what authority was to be entrusted with powers of creating small holdings, and whether this authority should be granted compulsory powers for the acquisition of land. In Mr. Collings's Bill, alluded to above, he made the County Council the authority, and gave as his reason that local knowledge was a necessary qualification; and, moreover, that the carrying out of any scheme could be done more cheaply by a local body on the spot.

Another witness thought that the County Authority would be 'too distant and not know enough about particular cases.' He thought the power ought to be something between the Parish and County Councils.

One witness was afraid that the County Council 'might not take the trouble to carry it out.'

## COMPULSORY POWERS.

As regards the power of compulsion, Mr. Collings only relinquished it in his Bill on account of the opposition the latter would otherwise receive; he thought that powers without compulsion would at least be better than no powers at all.

The whole of the evidence from subsequent witnesses teems with demands for compulsory powers, and fears that without them the Bill would be inoperative.



Three witnesses alone were against any such clause. Their opinions were as follows :

Mr. Pell, a landowner and tenant farmer in Northampton and the Isle of Ely, said that compulsion was unnecessary, because he knew no cases where the demand for small holdings was not satisfied. Later on he admitted that this was not the case with holdings up to 10 acres. He concluded his remarks by admitting that he was not opposed to the principle 'when Parliament is satisfied it is the right thing,' as, for instance, in the case of sites for places of worship and co-operative stores.

Mr. Smith, the Honorary Secretary of the East Suffolk Chamber of Agriculture, and the Managing Director of the Eastern Counties Institute, objected to a compulsory clause, while admitting its value in the case of allotments. 'In the case of allotments that compulsory provision is very valuable . . . . but in the case of small holdings I do not think that there is the same justification for it.' He was of opinion that enough land could be got by voluntary arrangement.

Mr. Wimpenny, a small holder in Cheshire, got as far as saying, 'I cannot see my way clear to compulsion . . . . because sometimes it leaves us enemies in our neighbourhood.'

A fourth witness, Mr. Humphreys Owen, without giving any reasons or evidence, said, in answer to a question, that *in his district* he thought sufficient land could be got by voluntary agreement.

The remaining eleven witnesses spoke most strongly in favour of a compulsory clause, as being the only means to make any power given to local bodies effectual. They all argued that without it many obstacles would be thrown in the way of acquiring land. The County Authorities were largely composed of the farmer class, which, as a rule, showed itself very averse to small holdings. Many landlords were willing to let land for this purpose, but their large tenant farmers would not give up the land. By giving landlords a handle the compulsory clause would have more a moral effect than anything else, and would probably never be actually called into use. This had been the case with the Allotments Act; many landlords had come forward who would not do anything before the addition of compulsory powers. The opinion was also given that even where there was land for sale, if there were no compulsion it gave the Local Authority a chance to stand on one side and let things be. The finding of the Committee in their Report, 'after having given full consideration to the arguments on both sides,' is summarized as follows:

‘That land in sufficient quantities for the purpose can be obtained by voluntary agreement, and that it is not necessary at present to resort to compulsory powers.’

## THE ACT OF 1892.

The Committee reported in June, 1890.

The Small Holdings Act was subsequently framed, and came into force in October, 1892. Under it power was given to County Councils to purchase land and adapt it for small holdings, which were to be resold on a deferred payment system. One-fifth of the purchase money was to be paid down, and the rest, representing capital and interest, was to be paid off in a term not exceeding fifty years.

Any county elector could petition the County Council to put the Act into force by alleging a demand for small holdings in his division. The County Council were then to appoint a Small Holdings Committee to inquire into the demand, and if it was found to be sent in 'in good faith and on reasonable grounds' the Small Holdings Committee should proceed to take measures to acquire suitable land in the district.

They were empowered to spend a sum which would not raise a rate of more than 1d. in the £ in the county.

The money was to be borrowed from the Public Works Loan Commissioners at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

If unable to purchase land the Council were empowered under certain conditions to take it on lease.

If they were of opinion that the men were unable to find the deposit required for purchase, the Council could let land to them up to 10 acres.

Under Part II. of the Act power was also given to the Council to advance money to a tenant for the purchase of his holding.

### THE RESULTS OF THE ACT.

The merits and demerits of this Act can best be judged by its subsequent practical effect.

How far the framers of the Act were justified in their policy of creating in it a strong bias towards ownership, and in disregarding the weighty evidence as regards the necessity of compulsory powers, can only be proved by the results of a fourteen years' trial.

We will therefore now consider what have been the actual results.

There are ninety-five County Councils in England, Wales, and Scotland.

According to a return issued in August, 1895, eight County Councils had made use of their powers under Part I. of the Act, and had acquired a total of 483 acres, affecting about 152 persons. One County Council—Somerset—had made use of their powers under Part II. of the Act, and had advanced money to an applicant to enable him to purchase a holding of 2 acres at Nailsea. £150 had been borrowed

from the Council, to be repaid by instalments of £2 18s. 1d. in fifty years. During this time also petitions had been presented to twenty-seven County Councils in England and Wales and fourteen counties in Scotland, but no land had been acquired. Twenty-seven County Councils in England and Wales and eighteen in Scotland had received no petitions.

Counting up the number of petitions out of a total of 126 presented to forty-nine County Councils, in the case of 14 land was acquired by nine County Councils.

## RETURN OF 1895.

County.	Extent of Land Acquired.	Small Holdings Sold.		Small Holdings Let.	
		No.	Acreage.	No.	Acreage.
Cambridge...	a. r. p. 31 2 23	4	a. r. p. —	20	About 1a. Or. 3p.
Devon ...	4 1 39	1	4 1 39	—	—
Lincoln ...	135 2 5	—	—	56	From 1 to 3 acres.
London ...	22 2 0	—	—	18	About 1a. Or. 20p.
Sussex ...	41 2 10	—	—	4	5½, 12, 13, 11½ acres.
Warwick ...	17 0 0	—	—	17	to a committee of seven.
Worcester ...	147 0 22	32 (proposed).	3 to 7 acres (proposed).	—	—
Total : England...	399 3 19	37	—	115	—
Scotland : Ross and Cromarty	83 1 9	25	—	—	—
Total : Great Britain ...	483 0 28	62	—	115	—

The return of 1903 shows no appreciable advance.  
The numbers given are as follows :

Name of Local Authority.	Extent of Land Acquired.	Small Holdings Sold.		Small Holdings Let.	
		No.	Acreage.	No.	Acreage.
	a. r. p.		a. r. p.		a. r. p.
England :					
Cambridgeshire C.C.	31 4 7	4*	14 3 39	16	16 0 8
Devonshire C.C. ...	4 1 39	1	4 1 39	—	—
Southampton (Hants) C.C. ...	64 0 26	—	—	17	62 0 33
Lincolnshire (Holland) C.C. ...	181 3 37	—	—	71	178 1 30
London C.C. ...	62 0 16½	—	—	42	58 2 11½
Sussex (West) C.C. ...	41 2 14	—	—	4	41 2 14
Warwickshire C.C. ...	35 3 23	—	—	16	17 0 0
Worcestershire C.C.	147 2 20	32	145 1 2	—	—
Total : England ...	569 0 22½	37	164 3 0	166	373 3 16½
Scotland : Ross and Cromarty C.C. ...	85 1 25⅔	25	83 1 25⅔	—	—
Total : Great Britain ...	652 2 8⅒	62	248 0 25⅔	166	373 3 16½

That is to say, in the seven years' interval between August, 1895, and December, 1902, 169 acres had been acquired affecting 51 persons, making a total for the whole ten years, 1892-1902, of 652½ acres affecting 228 persons.

Since this date the following lands have been relinquished, viz. :

	a. r. p.
London ... ..	7 0 6½
Warwick ... ..	18 3 23
	25 3 29½

\* This figure is incorrectly returned under this heading in the Returns of 1895 and 1903 as 14.

## WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 333

The following have been added :

					a.
Norfolk	...	...	...	...	92
Worcester (Perryfields)	...		...	...	47
„ (Littleton)	...		...	...	46
					<hr/> 185

Up to date, therefore, 812 acres have been acquired by ten County Councils.

Two County Councils appear to have taken steps to provide land, which resulted in complete failure.

The Warwickshire County Council, in answer to a petition from Hunningham, took, on a lease of fourteen years, 18 acres of land at £37 16s. The official report of the sequel is as follows :

‘ . . . As soon as the draft of a lease was received from the owner, the Council submitted a draft lease on similar terms to the applicants, who approved of it ; but when the lease was presented for signature they had changed their minds, and refused to sign the document or to have anything further to do with the land. The land has been untenanted for three-quarters of a year, and the Council have now arranged with the lessor for the lease to be cancelled on payment of one year’s rent in addition to the three-quarters of a year’s rent now due.’

The Council report that they are now ‘ very shy ’ of entertaining further applications.

Without exact specific knowledge it is perhaps hardly justifiable to draw any definite conclusions from this case. It appears, from the published Report

of the Small Holdings Committee, that at the local inquiry ten labourers asked for 1 acre each of arable land, and two tradesmen wanted 2 or 3 acres each. The Council agreed to take the field at £2 an acre. The men would presumably have to pay a slightly increased rent, and were expected to bear the expense of staking and road-making; if this would have brought their rent up to what is paid for the local allotments (*i.e.*, £2 8s. an acre)—and the field, as was stated by the men, was most unsuitable—one can hardly wonder that, on fully realizing the case, the men ‘changed their minds.’ This last sentence appears to be formulated out of the fact that the local County Councillor received a letter from the applicants demanding that the rent and terms should be altered.

The Flintshire County Council, in answer to six applications from Hope, acquired  $20\frac{1}{4}$  acres for £490.

An inquiry was subsequently held by the Inspector of the Local Government Board as a result of the application of the Council to borrow £550 to cover the cost of the above transaction. The application was refused. The land, however, was bought. When the purchase was completed the applicants had ‘altered their minds,’ and the land remained on the Council’s hands for several years. Eventually it was sold for the actual sum expended on it. The Council’s statement winds up gravely with, ‘There have been no applications since.’

The statement, on the other side, is that the land



purchased by the Council was most unsuitable for the purpose of small holdings, and that the whole matter was put before the Council in the first instance by men who were not agriculturists and who had no real understanding of the case.

### CONSIDERATION OF CASES WHERE LAND HAS BEEN ACQUIRED.

According to the return of 1903, 'the average cost of land by the Local Authorities for the purpose of small holdings, omitting the transaction in London, appears to have varied from about £14 in Ross and Cromarty and £23 in Cambridgeshire to £70 in Devon, the average of the 449 acres purchased being nearly £36. An average amount of approximately £2 per acre has been spent by the County Councils in the adaptation of the land for small holdings.'

The following detailed reports on the present condition of the holdings held under the various County Councils have been made for the Co-operative Small Holdings Society :

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### SMALL HOLDINGS OF THE HOLLAND COUNTY COUNCIL.

The following table shows the amount of land which has been purchased by the Holland County Council :\*

Date of Purchase.	Parish.	Extent.	Cost, exclusive of Cost of Registration of Title.	How Money Borrowed.	Yearly Repayment.	Annual Rents for Small Holdings.	Balances for Taxes Repaid, Title, and Management after Repayment of Principal and Interest.
			£		£ s.	£	£ s. d.
1894	Freiston	48 acres	2,638	£6,500 at 3½ per cent. of Public Works Loan Commissioners, to be repaid by equal instalments of principal and interest over fifty years	275 5	303	26 15 0
1894	Spalding	88 acres farmhouse and buildings	3,750				
1897	Tydd	46½ acres	2,532	£2,650 at 3¼ per cent. on same terms	107 12	130	22 8 0
Totals ...		182½ acres	8,920	—	382 17	433	49 3 0

In South Lincolnshire the ground had been well prepared for taking advantage of the Act of 1892.

Mr. Winfrey, a member of the County Council and subsequently chairman of their Small Holdings Committee, had, since the passing of the Allotments Act in 1887, been busily forming allotment clubs

\* Taken from a paper by Mr. Winfrey in the *Charity Organization Review*, February, 1904.

amongst the labourers. His idea was, by means of such clubs, to organize the demand amongst the labourers for allotments. The success of this enterprise was very marked. In 1887 there were 130 acres under allotment cultivation in nineteen parishes round Spalding. In 1894 there were 1,324 acres; and since the passing of the Local Government Act of 1894 a further 1,000 acres have been added.

The petition from Spalding to the County Council in 1894 emanated from the Spalding Allotment Club. The Council subsequently purchased a farm of 88 acres from Lord Carrington on the terms shown in the table. A sum of £50 was spent in repairs on the house and buildings, and £36 on hedging, ditching, and surveying. The farmhouse, buildings, and 14 acres of land are let at £40 per annum.

The remaining land is let in thirty holdings of from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 acres at an average of £2 an acre. The total yearly rent amounts to £143 19s. 8d. All the land is let on a yearly tenancy.

Freiston and Tydd are small villages in the neighbourhood of Boston.

At Freiston the 48 acres are divided into twenty-five holdings of 1, 2, and 3 acres. The rent is from 50s. to 60s. an acre, the total amounting to £120.

The cost of adaptation here was £20 1s. 2d., of which surveying accounts for £7 11s. 2d., and new gates, etc., for £12 10s.

At Tydd there are fifteen holdings of from 1 to

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6 acres, let at from £2 10s. to £3 an acre. The initial expenses here were:

				£	s.	d.
Surveying	...	...	...	3	11	6
Stakes, etc.	...	...	...	1	2	1
Gates, etc.	...	...	...	9	5	0
				<hr/>		
				£13	18	7

The cost of conveying the land amounted to £36.

The land acquired by the County Council, both at Spalding and near Boston, is specially suitable for small-holding cultivation, and is in the centre of a district on which small holders are already well established. The soil is naturally very productive and is easily worked. The crops grown are chiefly early potatoes, celery, cabbage, peas, and broad beans, besides ordinary corn crops. Flowers and bulbs are also gone in for to an increasing extent.\*

Many of the County Council tenants hold small plots of land elsewhere, which gives them a sufficient acreage to get an entire living on their own land. Some of them earn wages at other occupations, but are anxious to acquire more land to enable them to fill up all their time working for themselves. These men are of opinion that from 12 to 15 acres is the most convenient size for one man to work. On this type of holding farm crops would be grown to fatten pigs and stock to supply

\* For a more detailed account of the methods of cultivation of the small holders in these districts, see Reports on 'The Holdings of the South Lincolnshire Small Holdings Association,' and 'Small Holdings near Boston.'

manure ; also early potatoes, celery, cabbage, or peas and beans to sell for cash. In some cases horse labour is hired, or some of the men keep horses and add to their earnings by working for others.

The rent of the smaller holdings runs from £2 to £5 at Spalding, according to its proximity to the town, situation, and type of soil ; near Boston the rent is from £2 to £3, and on the 'toft land' as much as £5 and £6 an acre.

The rent, therefore, at which the County Council has been able to let their land compares very favourably with that of other holdings in the district.

It is specially to be noted that, without any charge whatsoever on the ratepayers, the County Council, at the end of forty years, will be the owner of these estates, producing a rental of £433 a year.

Attention is also drawn to the fact that the County Council has been wise enough not to insist on the resale of the land to would-be small holders, a condition which would certainly have prevented a very large number of the men from taking advantage of the undertaking.

#### SMALL HOLDINGS OF THE NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL AT NORDELPH.

In 1904 the County Council acquired a farm at Nordelph, a small village six miles from Downham Market, in response to a petition sent in by a number of working men.

This petition, when its history is traced, appears to be due to the influence of Mr. Winfrey, whose interest in the small-holding question was well known locally. Being aware of the keen demand for land amongst holders of allotments, he had himself purchased, two years previously, 50 acres of fen land in the same parish. To quote his own words: 'I gave £2,000 for this land and let it "like ripe cherries" in small holdings for £100 a year. Indeed, so great was the demand and so limited the supply, that the night I went down to let it out the village club-room was crowded with seventy or eighty labourers, and 50 acres was like one small loaf amongst a hungry crowd. I was only able to satisfy the *few* who lived nearest the land; the majority of those present I had to send empty away.'

As an outcome of this he advised the men to petition the County Council to put the Small Holdings Act into force, showed them how to do this, and even undertook to voice their requirements at the public inquiry which was subsequently held. At this inquiry, held in March, 1904, there were about forty applicants asking for 163 acres.

The Small Holdings Committee reported to the Council in the following April. They pointed out that under the Act the Council could not hire in this case, and that there was no land in the market at present; but they had reason to suppose that one or two farms would shortly be for sale, and they advised the Council to keep in touch with the

district, with a view to considering the matter further should land come into the market.

At the Council meeting in April it was definitely known that a suitable farm was for sale, and power was delegated to the Small Holdings Committee to purchase the land at such a price as seemed reasonable for the purpose.

In the following month the farm, of 92 acres, was bought for £4,100—*i.e.*, about £45 an acre. The Council borrowed £4,200 at  $3\frac{3}{4}$  per cent., the legal charges and expenses of registering title, etc., being about £100. By an annual payment of £190 the principal and interest will be repaid in forty-eight years, when the land will become the property of the County Council.

The farmhouse and 12 acres of pasture land was let to an outsider for £50. There is a strong feeling that the grass land should have been kept for the benefit of the small-holding class, many of whom were anxious for it.\*

The rest of the land was divided up into thirty-three lots of from 1 to 4 acres and one lot of 5 acres. The total rent received is estimated at £246 5s. 6d., which represents an average of £2 13s. an acre. The Council pay taxes and drainage rates, clean the ditches and maintain fences. The tenants pay poor and district rates.

The land is let on a yearly tenancy from Michaelmas, subject to twelve months' notice. The rents

\* I am informed that this has since been let to small holders.

are paid half-yearly. The holdings were allotted by ballot. Of the tenants, twenty-eight are agricultural labourers, one is a carpenter, one a baker, one a grocer, one travels with a show in summer. All the holders live in or near the village. Many of the labourers are in regular employment; a number of them are jobbing labourers, and others are employed in dyking. There is much piece-work to be had all round on the large farms, and the men leave off at four or five o'clock, which gives them time to work on their holdings.

The crops grown are largely wheat, potatoes, and mangels. On many of the plots a corner is devoted to peas, beans, radishes, and other vegetables for their own consumption. On two or three plots a wooden pigsty has been put up by the men, and in one case a holder with a big family, who had been an agricultural labourer all his life, has built a very efficient wooden stable, pigsty, and tool-shed, and keeps a useful-looking pony, with which, I was told, he worked his land.

At the time of my visit (May, 1905) there were some fine crops of wheat well up on several of the plots. The average yield of corn is about 8 coombs (1 coomb = 18 stone) to the acre, and 11 and 12 are usual in a good season.

The holder who owned the travelling show kept a lot of horses for the purpose, which he used in winter for ploughing and working the land of the others who were in regular employment. He was of opinion that an agricultural man with 1 acre



did best by growing stuff for his own consumption and for feeding a few pigs for manure; that it did not pay him to grow stuff to sell.

Another man worked regularly on the roads; he held 5 acres, but said he could only manage so much, when in regular work, because he had a grown-up family who helped him. He said that in that district the most profitable size for small holdings were: 10 acres for a man to live on altogether, 5 acres for a man at catch work, 1 acre for a man in regular employment. He said that there was still a very great demand amongst the labourers for small holdings; he considered the parish allotments, of which there were 31 acres, had formed a good start for larger holdings, and all the men with allotments were anxious for more land.

*Conditions of Success.* — As the land has not long been acquired, it is too soon to generalize on its success. That it is likely to remain as successful as at present appears is probable, owing to the following favourable circumstances:

1. The land is good and easily worked.
2. It is situated very conveniently for the village.
3. There is a good deal of piece-work to be obtained in the district, which enables the holders to supplement their incomes.

## 344 HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### SMALL HOLDINGS OF THE HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AT EASTON, WINCHESTER.

The Hampshire County Council was petitioned in 1896 by sixteen persons wanting land for small holdings.

After holding an inquiry, 64 acres were acquired on the Easton road, two miles from Winchester. The land is rented on a twenty-one years' lease from the trustees of Sir Charles Shelley's estate at £1 an acre.

It was let out to twelve tenants in fifteen lots, varying from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 10 acres, at a rent of £1 5s. to £1 10s. an acre, paid half-yearly. The Council pays tithe.

The total rent received from the holders amounts to £78 6s. 3d. A balance of £8 10s. 9d. remains after deducting £69 15s. 6d. for head rent and expenses.

*Character of Tenants.*—The tenants all live in Winchester. Of the original twelve, there were two dairymen, two publicans, one job-gardener, one market-gardener with a retail shop, one shoemaker, two shopkeepers, and one coal merchant.

At the end of the first year four gave up their holdings; at the present time there are six tenants only. In most cases one of the original tenants took on the holdings of those giving up, one tenant now holding 31 acres in seven lots.

*Character of Holdings.*—The land lies on the slope of a hill facing south. It is a light soil on

chalk, shallow at the top of the hill. The plots are staked out and are all used for growing ordinary farm crops, with the exception of two holdings which are worked as market-gardens. There is a difficulty in obtaining water for the latter purpose, as there is none on the spot.

Of the present tenants, the largest, holding 31 acres, is a dairyman, and has other land close to. He uses his land entirely as an adjunct to his dairy farm, and grows corn and roots.

A coal merchant, holding 5 acres, grows corn and fodder for his horses. Three milk-sellers, with 2 or 3 acres each, cultivate them for corn and roots.

Of the two market-gardening plots, one, of 5 acres, is worked by a job-gardener, who sells his produce to Winchester shops. He employs one man regularly on his holding, and works himself at night.

Another man holds 3 acres, on which he grows vegetables for Winchester shops. He also has 3 acres of allotment land, for which he pays £4 an acre. He keeps a lot of pigs to supply manure, and also buys much town manure. He was of opinion that in spite of the land being very poor it could be made to pay by cultivation and manure, and that there was an unsupplied demand for market-garden stuff in Winchester, so that if land could be got hold of by small men who understood cultivation, it would be of great benefit to many people.

On the face of it the undertaking did not seem

a very great success. The acquisition of the land appears to be of benefit to those using it as an adjunct to their professions, and the plots at the time of my visit seemed in good condition with fair crops.

On attempting to discover the reason of half the original number of holdings being given up, I met with various differing opinions on the subject. The shopkeepers seem to have retired because they were tired of it; one man, who was doing very well with a retail market-gardening trade, had to leave on account of his health; and I was told that one or two who had gone in for market-gardening gave up because they could not make it pay. I gathered, however, on further inquiries, that in the latter cases it was due to personal incompetence or want of knowledge in proper methods of cultivation.

There seemed to be a decided opinion that the apparent lack of desire for the holdings, as exhibited by the diminution of the number of tenants, and the absorption of the land by the remaining ones, was not existent in effect; and that there were many people desirous of acquiring plots of land of 2 or 3 acres in extent to use as market-gardens.

I gathered that more discrimination in the choice of suitable tenants, and a greater personal interest in the scheme by some members of the Council, with a practical knowledge of the people's requirements, would lead to greater success in the developments of this undertaking.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SMALL  
HOLDINGS.

The County Council was petitioned in 1894 by a number of workmen from the parish of Comberton, three miles from Cambridge. An inquiry was held, at which sixty applicants for land appeared.

A 36-acre field, adjacent to the road and just outside the village, had previously been bought by a gentleman interested in the small-holding question with the idea of letting it to the village men.

The County Council agreed to purchase  $31\frac{1}{2}$  acres of this; the remaining land was let out in  $\frac{1}{2}$ -acre allotments by the original purchaser. The price paid for the land was £700, or about £22 an acre. The legal charges added over 8 per cent. to this price—viz. :

	£	s.	d.
Conveyance and registration of title ...	22	10	1
Counsel's fees for investigating title ...	7	14	6
Land Registry's fees ... ..	3	18	0
Registration of titles of small holders	16	13	9
	<hr/>		
	£50	16	4

In addition to this appear the following items of expense :

	£	s.	d.
Draining ... ..	62	17	1
Professional charge for setting out the land and valuing the plots ... ..	7	17	6

The compensation paid to the outgoing tenant brought the total extra expense up to £176 9s. 2d.

The land was originally divided into thirty lots, of about 1 acre 0 rood 3 poles. The plots near the

road were valued at from £32 7s. to £36 8s. ; those at the top end of the field at £20 15s.

Only four men willing to purchase were found ; they each took up 2 acres. One of these paid outright for his plot. The others paid the one-fifth deposit, and became liable for the balance by deferred payments of the remaining capital with interest at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

There have subsequently been two more purchasers.

The total acreage now sold amounts to 14 acres 3 roods 39 poles, representing a value of £483 14s. On this amount £125 13s. 11d. still remains to be paid.

Of the remaining land—viz., 16 acres 1 rood 8 poles—10 acres had to be let straight off to a neighbouring farmer at £11 ; it was at the far end of the field away from the road, and was very much heavier soil than the rest of the ground.

The remaining lots were let in the first instance to eleven tenants ; they are now in the hands of five.

The total rent received for the whole 16 acres is £20 10s. Allowing for expenses, this is about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the value of the land still in the hands of the Council.

*Character of Holdings.*—Comberton is a purely agricultural village. It is already well supplied with allotments. The Shepherds' Club has bought a piece of land close to the village, and lets it out to its own members in small plots. There are also

a large number held under the Parish Council. The men use them chiefly for growing vegetables for Cambridge Market, one of their number, with a horse and cart, acting as carrier for the others.

The smaller County Council plots are cultivated in the same way, and by hand. There is one regular market-gardener who holds 2 acres. One or two have planted apples and greengages and some bush fruit. The larger holdings are, however, under ordinary farm crops, chiefly wheat, potatoes, beans, and barley. The latter is ground for pig-feeding. Many of the men fatten pigs, and about six wooden sheds, or pigsties, have been put up on the land.

With the exception of the market-gardener mentioned above, all the men have other occupations or use the land in connection with other holdings.

On the face of it, the demand for land seems to be apparently satisfied here. If the old tenants had not taken up the plots which had been relinquished, it seems likely that these would have been on the Council's hands.

On the other hand, if the Council had not been more or less obliged by the terms of the Act to purchase this land, but had been able to hire and sublet it to the tenants, it is probable that the demand for these holdings would be far greater. It will be observed that the expenses subsequent to purchase are 25 per cent. on the cost of purchase, and of this over 8 per cent. are for

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legal charges. Therefore, the price necessary to cover the total cost of the land, plus interest over a term of years, brings the cost per acre higher than the cautious agriculturist knows to be its true value.

Two of the plots sold were purchased by a retired cab-driver for the sole purpose of adding to the value of two cottages which he possessed in the neighbourhood. It is probable that if he had looked upon the land purely as a source of remuneration from cultivation he would, like others, have hesitated to sink his capital in this way.

### SMALL HOLDINGS UNDER THE WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AT CATSHILL.

Catshill is a village of 2,785 inhabitants, two miles north of Bromsgrove Station on the Stourbridge road, and twelve miles from Birmingham.

The district is largely inhabited by nail-makers; the forges were attached to the cottages, and both men and women worked at the industry. The introduction of machinery in the manufacture of hob-nails and Flemish tacks threw a large number of people out of employment, or considerably lessened the profit to be earned. £1 a week can still be earned in the manufacture of the brush-nail; but the industry is dying, as none of the children go in for it. One old man of seventy, who has worked sixty-two years at it, gets 7s. a week, out of which 1s. 3d. goes for 'breeze'—the



small coal used for the forge. Some of the women can earn from 5s. to 6s. a week. They were an industrious set of people, and through carrying on their trade in the country had some knowledge of cultivation.\* The children of out-of-work nailers would go round the district buying up flowers to retail in Birmingham to add to those grown in their own gardens; and many of the men had acquired allotments under the Acts of 1887 and 1890. There was, therefore, a considerable desire for land amongst the men themselves, which paved the way for putting into force the Small Holdings Act when it was passed.

In September, 1892, at a meeting of the Worcestershire County Council it was moved by Mr. Willis Bund, and seconded by Mr. Impey, that a Small Holdings Committee should be appointed under Section 5 of the Small Holdings Act of 1892. This was subsequently constituted with nineteen members, and instructed to obtain information as to—

- (a) The number of small holdings within the county above 1 acre and not exceeding 10 acres.
- (b) How such small holdings were cultivated.
- (c) Whether there was any demand for such small holdings.

Handbills and circulars were prepared, with a view to elicit information as to putting the Act in force, and in June, 1894, the Committee reported

that upwards of 2,000 public notices on the provisions of the Act had been issued, but only *one* application had been received in response. Subsequently, however, petitions alleging a demand for small holdings were received from various quarters, and inquiries held.

As a result of a petition sent by the nailers in the Catshill district, an inquiry was held, and it was decided to put the Act into force. Negotiations had meanwhile been entered into for acquiring Woodrow Farm, with 147 acres of land adjoining Catshill village, and this was subsequently purchased at the rate of £33 an acre, including the timber.

A meeting was held at Catshill at which there were a very large number of persons present who wanted land, and the Act was explained to them. The Council satisfied themselves that a certain number of these people were unable to buy—*i.e.*, find the necessary deposit of 20 per cent.—and therefore that they were justified in acquiring land for hiring as well.

A valuer was employed to advise as to fencing, division, etc. The total expense incurred in adaptation was £287 14s. 7d. The land was divided up into thirty-two lots of from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 8 acres, and at a meeting held in Catshill early in 1896, ten lots were disposed of to men who agreed to pay down the 20 per cent. deposit and so become purchasers of the land. The applicants for the other lots, being unable to do this, were allowed to become

tenants till the following September. As a matter of fact, it was three years before some of them completed their purchase by paying down the one-fifth of the purchase money, which they did by instalments.

A value was placed on each holding which it was calculated would recoup the County Council in forty years from the date of the completion of the purchase for the purchase money and the expense in adaptation. This value works out at from £32 to £50 per acre for the various lots. The yearly instalment payable of capital and interest combined comes to £1 10s. to £2 an acre, which is less than the average rent of the district for land in small quantities.

There are now twenty-five occupiers in all, three of the men holding two lots and two of them three lots. All the instalments have been paid up to date, and the land transferred to the purchasers at the Land Registry. The men who were able from the first to become purchasers by paying down their instalments have always paid up well. The instalments are collected half-yearly by a special surveyor, who reports on the state of the holdings as to cultivation, repairs, etc. There has been one case of failure where a man did not cultivate his holding properly and did sublet it contrary to agreement; after due warning, his land was sold and allotted to another.

There have also been two cases where, after some years, the original purchasers have wished to

sell their holdings. In one case the man had repaid the Council £39 8s. 7d., and was allowed by the Council to transfer it to another for £40.

In the other case the holder of two lots who had only repaid the Council £78 1s. 2d. was asking £200 for the disposal of these two lots to a man who held an adjoining lot. The transferee, if this were allowed, would therefore have to pay, in addition to this £200, the sum of £233 15s. 4d. with interest at 4 per cent. to the County Council in thirty-four and a half years; and the transferer would make a profit of £121 18s. 10d. The question also arose whether this man should be allowed to sell to another small holder without first giving other residents in the neighbourhood, or the general public, a chance, as it would not do for the lots to get in the hands of a few. On the other hand, the Council did not wish to stop the benefit arising to the adjoining holder. It was decided that such cases must be judged on their individual merits. This man was allowed to sell, and went on to a 100-acre farm.

In 1903 the Council purchased another 47 acres at Perryfields, close to the Woodrow Farm already purchased. The sum paid was £3,000, for which the Local Government Board sanctioned a loan at 3½ per cent. The land is already let to allotment tenants, and the lease does not expire till 1909. At the expiration of the lease the Council propose to let the land out in small holdings under the Act of 1892.

*Cultivation of Holdings.*

The holdings are all cultivated much in the same way, with a mixture of agricultural and market-gardening crops. Strawberries are the main crop on most of the holdings as regards fruit. One man only has gone in for extensive planting of other kinds, and has a good show of currants, gooseberries, and young apple-trees. The stock kept are pigs, poultry, and the horse which takes the produce by road into Birmingham and brings back the manure. The land is light, and in most cases is clean and well cultivated; but the market-gardening is not of a very high order, and is of a kind which can be done without much hand cultivation, the crops being chiefly cabbage, beans, peas, carrots, etc., for which the land is mainly worked with ordinary farm implements. Potatoes and corn are to be found on most of the holdings, chiefly for home consumption.

I was told that from 8 to 12 acres were necessary for an entire living. The holdings vary in size from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 8 acres, but seven of the men have now more than one lot, which brings their total acreage up to the necessary amount. The others either hold more land independently of the County Council, or supplement their earnings by doing horse-work for others, carting manure from Birmingham, or buying up stuff to retail with their own produce.

*Individual Cases.*—(1) One of the most pros-

perous-looking holdings, on which a house has been built with money advanced from the County Council, is made up of two adjacent lots with a total acreage of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  acres. There is a small piece of grass-land on which the horse can be turned out, and two breeding sows. Another patch is devoted to oats for the horse, and the rest is laid out in market-garden crops of all kinds. A considerable area has been planted with apple-trees, currants, and gooseberries.

The holder had been employed in a town. He and his two sons were able to work this amount with very occasional hired labour. Now that the land was in working order they could well do with some more.

This man is paying £15 5s. 6d. for his  $9\frac{1}{2}$  acres. His house was erected at a cost of £240, of which £200 was advanced by the County Council. His yearly repayment of capital and interest on this sum amounts to £13 4s. 4d. for a period of thirty-three years. That is to say, he is paying a total of £28 9s. 10d. for his house and land, which works out at £3 an acre.

(2) Another man holds three of the original lots amounting to  $14\frac{1}{2}$  acres. He had been a nailer earning an average of 11s. 6d. a week. When the nail trade became very bad he started dealing in poultry, and worked his way up. He had first got on to 6 acres of the Belbroughton Parish Council allotments, which had been a good start for eventually getting on to the County Council land. He is

doing well, and has just bought a 3-acre freehold in the district. His land was more under farm crops than most of the holdings, although the only stock he kept were pigs and poultry, for the latter of which he went in largely. He was of opinion that more of them ought to keep stock, and that a little grass land would be a great advantage. This man had also put up a house and buildings under the County Council scheme for the sum of £347 3s., for which he pays a yearly instalment of £14 8s. 6d. for thirty-five years; the instalment paid for his three lots of land amounts to £24 1s. 4d., bringing the total amount for the holding up to £38 9s. 10d., which works out roughly at £2 12s. an acre. It struck me that the cost of the buildings attached to the house must be out of all proportion to their value, as regards use, to this type of holding, where practically the horse and pigs are the only stock kept. In this case the larger size of the holding keeps the actual yearly figure low per acre.

(3) But on the next holding, where much the same thing applies, although the house and buildings only cost £300, the man holds but 3 acres of land, for which he pays £5 9s. 6d.; the £12 1s. 9d., however, which he pays for the house brings his total yearly repayment up to £17 10s. 10d., or over £5 an acre. Applying this to the question of putting up buildings for small holdings in such a manner as to make the increased rent paid for the land pay for the buildings, the amount of land put to the holding will have to be calculated so as not

to make the rent, which will repay the landlord, prohibitive to the small man.

The figures mentioned above are not theoretically a *perfectly* accurate statement as to the yearly cost. The sum paid for the buildings is calculated so as to be repaid in the number of years which have still to run before the instalments for the land are paid up, so that the later a man defers putting up his house on the land he is acquiring, the greater yearly sum he has to pay in annual instalments for the building.

The following account of the scheme by which the Worcestershire County Council advances money to small holders for putting up buildings is taken from an admirable summary of the work of the County Council, compiled by the Clerk of the County Council, published in the *County Council Times* for December 7, 1904 :

#### *Building Scheme.*

The County Council advance three-quarters of the actual cost of house and buildings. The applicant has to satisfy the Council that he can pay one-quarter, and must name the architect or builder who will prepare the plans and be responsible for the proper erection of the same. On receipt of the application the matter is referred to the Council's surveyor, who is instructed to report upon it. If the report is satisfactory and the applicant has paid one-fifth of the purchase money for his land and all the instalments up to date,



he must then furnish the Clerk of the Council with plans and specifications, etc., which will be submitted to the County Surveyor and the County Medical Officer. The advances are made in such sums as may be agreed upon, payable on the certificate of the County Surveyor. The Surveyor has to make a half-yearly report as to the state and cultivation of each small holding and whether the agreements are complied with, and where houses and buildings have been erected, whether they are in repair.

*Repayment for Building.*—The advance is repaid by instalments over a period not exceeding the remainder of the term in respect of which the whole balance of the purchase money of the small holding is payable. As an instance of the procedure the following is a memorandum as to the application for a loan for building :

On May 2, 1904, the Clerk of the County Council received a letter from C. H. Gadd, architect, of Bromsgrove, enclosing plans and specifications of a house and buildings for William Healey, proposed to be erected on small holding No. 19.

The estimated cost :

					£
House and buildings	...	...	...	...	400
Well-sinking	...	...	...	...	20
Haulage	...	...	...	...	30
Architect's fees	...	...	...	...	18
					<hr/>
					£468

Healey will find one-quarter of the estimated cost. The County Council is asked for three-quarters. The sum has been included in the estimated expenditure of the Small Holdings Committee under the heading 'Advanced for Buildings, 1905-1906.' William Healey is a market-gardener, and occupies holdings Nos. 18 and 19. The acreage and the half-yearly instalments paid are as follows :

			a.	r.	p.	£	s.	d.
No. 18	...	...	6	2	38	4	12	11
No. 19	...	...	5	2	29	4	8	5
			<hr/>			<hr/>		
			12	1	27	£9	1	4

Assuming that the County Council advances £370, the amount of repayment in the balance of the forty years—*i.e.*, 31 in this case—commencing with the first payment on March 25, 1905, and ending September 29, 1935, will amount to a half-yearly sum of about £10 10s. This house is of a better character and the buildings larger than on the other plots where houses have been erected in the same way.

The Council have already advanced £1,794 16s. for buildings, and eight houses have been erected.\*

*Character of Houses.*—The houses all contain a kitchen and living-room, a back kitchen, larder, and three bedrooms. The buildings have a stable, tool-house, copper for pig food, and generally

\* Since this was written another house has been put up, bringing the sum advanced to £2,078 19s.

two pigsties. The contract price averaged £286 (excluding hauling, which is a very considerable item). All repairs, with the exception of the external painting, are done by the small holder; the 4 per cent. charged to the small holder as interest on the capital expended covers the painting and the insurance. This is arranged so as to insure the security of the County Council being maintained.

So much for the official account of the building scheme. The Worcestershire County Council appear to have realized the fact that by enabling the men to put up buildings on the land they have enhanced the value of the land itself; and, moreover, enabled the men to work their holdings in the more profitable way which is possible when the men live close to their work.

If there is any criticism to offer, one feels inclined to suggest that the houses and buildings are in many cases unnecessarily expensive for the class of man who has in the end to pay for them. How much this is due to the personal ambition of the small holder, and how much to the exigencies of by-laws, I have not ascertained. But it struck me that, in cases where the men are starting in life, and are endeavouring to acquire their holdings at the same time as they are earning their living, the houses, which are all of the villa rather than the cottage type, must add an unnecessarily large item to the yearly outgoings; and that on account of this only those who are doing really well could

afford to derive that advantage which accrues from actually living on the holding itself.

*General Considerations.*

This experiment of the Worcestershire County Council is of particular interest, inasmuch as it has been the means of restoring a poverty-stricken district to one of comparative well-being. It has not only not cost the ratepayers a penny, but has been the means of removing a large number of people off the rates. The factors which seem to have contributed to the success are:

1. The neighbourhood of Birmingham as a market.

2. The previous knowledge of the nailers of the cultivation of ordinary crops, fostered by the earlier acquiring of allotments.

3. The fact that strawberry cultivation had been introduced with success many years ago in a neighbouring village, and the local people were thus made aware by example of the possible remuneration.

4. The fact of the nailers being a hard-working, thrifty set of people to begin with, who had fallen into poverty through no fault of their own.

5. The presence of enlightened men on the Worcestershire County Council.

In connection with the last item, I should like to call attention to the fact that in 1894, after 2,000 public notices had been circulated by the Council as to the provisions of the Act, *only one*

*application* was in *the first instance* received in response. Many, if not all, County Councils would have sat down satisfied after this that they need take no further steps in this direction.

#### SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS ON THE RESULTS OF THE ACT.

A general consideration of the foregoing reports in search of conclusions leads one first to see how very little there is to be learnt from the experience of fourteen years' working of this Act. The little that there is, allowing for subsequent qualifications, might be summed up as follows :

1. That the renting, rather than the purchasing, powers of the Act have been most used.

2. That there is a distinct tendency to a readjustment of the original lots, which has as a result the survival of the best tenants on more suitable areas, as regards size, for cultivation.

3. That the Act is workable, but only really satisfactorily in those cases where its administration is fostered by local knowledge and sympathetic County Councillors, and that where this is not the case no progress is made.

4. That the agricultural conditions under which the various holdings have succeeded are very varied, and the success is not due to any uniform nature of facilities as to soil, markets, etc.

These points will now be considered in detail.

RENTING RATHER THAN PURCHASING POWERS OF  
THE ACT ARE MOST USED.

One of the chief points which we have to learn from the foregoing statistics is that the purchasing powers of the Act have only been made use of by would-be small holders in the case of two County Councils—*i.e.*, Worcestershire and Cambridgeshire ; and in the latter case it was only found possible to get four purchasers (since risen to six) out of the sixteen men who wanted the land.

Even in the case of Worcester it was found necessary to allow a certain proportion of the men to become tenants for some years before they were in a position to ‘complete the purchase’—*i.e.*, pay down the deposit as required.

In the other cases, the only expedient was to allow the men to become tenants ; in the case of four Councils—Warwick, Sussex, Hampshire, and part of London—the land is leased by the Council itself for a term of years, and therefore the only course open is to sublet it.

If, therefore, we go by the fact that the desire of the applicants is always for renting land, and that (except in Worcestershire) it is the powers of the Act for renting that have been most used, we must conclude that the bias of the Act towards purchase, at any rate the necessity to pay a deposit, has been a mistake.

# READJUSTMENT AND ABSORPTION OF LOTS.

The second point to be observed is the distinct tendency to the absorption of a certain number of the original lots by the more successful holders when for various reasons plots become vacant.

The following table shows how this has taken place up to the present time :

County.	Date of Acquisition.	Original Number.		Present Number, 1906.		Increase or Decrease of	
		Tenants.	Purchasers.	Tenants.	Purchasers.	Tenants.	Purchasers.
Cambridge ...	1894	16	4	6	6	-10	+2
Hampshire ...	1896	17	—	6	—	-11	—
Lincoln (Holland) {	1894	71	—	70	—	-1	—
	1897						
Sussex (West) ...	1894	5	—	3	—	-2	—
Warwick ...	1894	15	—	15	—	—	—
Worcester ...	1894	—	32	—	25	—	-7
Norfolk ...	1903	33	—	33	—	—	—
		157	36	133	31	-24	-5

The moral that this fact seems to point is that, by a process of natural selection, the unsuitable men will soon get weeded out, and their place be taken by the men who have proved themselves to be so successful that they are in a position to increase their holdings in this way at the end of a few years; and by this process also we arrive gradually at that size which proves itself to be the most economic for their particular type of cultivation.

SATISFACTORY RESULTS WHERE THE UNDERTAKING IS FOSTERED WITH LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND SYMPATHY.

It will be noticed that out of the total 812 acres acquired in Great Britain more than half this amount is held by two Councils only—viz.: Worcestershire 240, and Lincolnshire 181; and these two counties may be cited as the two most conspicuously successful, both in the administration of the Act, and in the cultivation by the small holders.

The Act, therefore, when put into force is found to be workable; but it has only been of any appreciable value in those cases where men on the County Council have made this question a subject of special consideration and care.

The little that has been done by the other County Councils is due to the temporary interest either of an outsider or a member of the County Council; and where this interest has been removed the cause makes no further advance.

It has recently been pointed out that even on the Holland (Lincoln) County Council, since the balance of parties altered on the Council, no attempt has been made to deal with further petitions.



THE VARIETY OF AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS  
UNDER WHICH COUNTY COUNCIL HOLDINGS  
HAVE SUCCEEDED.

It may be said that in the case of the Lincolnshire County Council holdings alone are there any special conditions of soil which make the locality suitable for small holdings. Each of the other places has its own peculiarity out of which the natural advantages for small holdings in that particular district arise.

The Worcestershire holdings have Birmingham for a market; on the other hand, it must be remembered that this is twelve miles distant, and that not only the produce but the manure is all carted by road. The adaptability of the place to strawberry-growing, and the independent, hard-working character of the people, are probably equally significant factors.

The Norfolk holdings are on good soil; but their proximity to a village, and the fact that there is much opportunity for piece-work in the district, are, perhaps, the chief factors in success here.

The proximity of the Cambridgeshire holdings to a village, and of the Hampshire ones to Winchester, seems also to have been enough to induce success in districts which have otherwise no special adaptability to small holdings.

### CONSIDERATION OF CASES WHERE PETITIONS WERE PRESENTED, BUT LAND NOT ACQUIRED.

It has been mentioned that up to 1895 in twenty-seven English counties petitions had been presented without any land being acquired. It may be instructive to investigate the various reasons which led to this result.

In the return of 1895 abstracts are given of the resolutions of the County Council on the petitions. From this source the various reasons can be tabulated as follows :

No land available ... ..	6
Council's terms not accepted ... ..	5
'Petitions withdrawn' ... ..	10
Private arrangements made possible ... ..	5
Referred to other bodies ... ..	2
Single applications not within the terms of the Act ... ..	5
Available area too large ... ..	1
No reply to circular asking for further particulars ... ..	1
Land too high priced ... ..	3
Committee decided that the petition was not presented in good faith and on reasonable grounds ... ..	5
Requirements not sufficient to justify putting the Act into operation ... ..	2
Committee reported adverse to the petition	1
Owners refused to entertain any advances, or made unreasonable conditions ... ..	13

These reasons are 'official.' It is probable that there are many varied interpretations to be put

upon them, both by outsiders and by those who have been connected with the actual workings in each case. It is only possible to comment in particular upon cases where one has had an opportunity of local knowledge, and in general by judgment of results.

In the case of Wiltshire we have an insight into the official interpretation of the words of the Act, 'in good faith and on reasonable grounds'—viz.: 'The applicants being either unable to point to any land which they wished to rent, or pointing to land which they admitted could not be used for the purpose without injury or injustice to the present holders.'

#### WANT OF SYMPATHY AND KNOWLEDGE ON PART OF COUNTY COUNCIL.

There is no doubt that while some County Councils may have made an honest endeavour to deal with the cases where petitions had been sent in, only too many of them were ready to accept as a final decision, without further comment or inquiry, any discouraging finding of the Small Holdings Sub-Committee, and to let the matter drop.

At first a certain number of applications seem to have come in, as it was intended they should, on the initiative of the people themselves who desired land. Practically all the applications received in most of the counties were made during the first

year after the Act came into force. Out of 103 alluded to in the returns, 90 were sent in before the end of 1893. Since that time the few applications that have come in have, as a rule, been made through the initiative of an energetic County Councillor or a local so-called 'agitator,' who, knowing the needs of the men, has shown them how to use their powers.

Nothing is so catching amongst agricultural men of the particular class for whom the act was framed as the effect of success to one of their own number in any undertaking. If, in the first year or two, members of the County Councils had been more personally sympathetic with, and had had a greater knowledge of, the rural wants which would have enabled them to put the powers of the Act to better effect, 'a small revolution might have been effected'—to quote the words of an expert on this question.

As it was, the bolder spirits who had made an attempt to sample what this Bill was to do for them had nothing finally to show to tempt their more cautious brethren to follow their example.

The following official statements, while throwing no light on the actual reasons as to why no action was taken after applications, will serve to illustrate this want of sympathy and knowledge to those who are really aware of the very real and keen desire in these particular country districts for small holdings :

*Lincoln (Kesteven).*—After applications from

seven villages, 'it has not been found necessary in this county to take any steps under the Small Holdings Act.'

*Derby*.—Very little done, 'for the simple reason that either they are not required, or there is no difficulty in obtaining them.'

*Lancashire*.—Two applications, neither entertained: 'one by a person who was unable to afford to buy the land himself.' (This person may have been unsuitable, but it is the person who cannot buy that the Act was framed to help; therefore the remark seems rather superfluous.)

*Suffolk (East)*.—Petitions received from four parishes, but it 'was not considered necessary to put the Act into force.' On one of these cases the County Council minute is as follows:

'The land required by the petitioners was part of a farm belonging to a charity. The Committee suggested to the trustees that they should meet the wishes of the petitioners with certain modifications. The County Council adopted the report of the Committee, a copy of which was sent to the trustees of the Charity and to the Charity Commissioners. No further action in the matter has been taken by the County Council.'

. *Dorset*.—Applications from ten men. 'The petitioners appear to be labouring men, and the Sub-Committee are of opinion that in case of adverse circumstances they could not be answerable for the rent. The Act does not provide for a compulsory purchase of land by the County

Council, and from this inquiry and from other sources the Sub-Committee believe that considerable difficulty would be experienced in obtaining available land.

‘Your Committee do not recommend the Council to take any further steps in the matter.

‘The report was received and adopted.’

*Kent*.—‘An inquiry was held by the Small Holdings Committee, who found that there was a *bona fide* demand.

‘Further correspondence ensued, but the matter fell through owing to the high price asked for the purchase of the land, and *no resolution of the County Council was ever passed on the subject.*’

*Salop*.—‘That the Council do not consider that there is such a demand for small holdings in the county as would justify them in putting the Act into operation.’

*Surrey*.—‘A report of the Allotments Committee adverse to the proposal was received by the County Council at their meeting in November, 1893, and adopted without formal resolution.’

There is a certain cold finality about these statements calculated to chill the half-awakened aspirations of the labourers, who, despite their own pessimism in the matter, watch with interest the fortunes of their fellow-workers who have had ‘the cheek’ to send in their wishes to the Council, embodied, to their minds, in the character of their own representative, probably a farmer, who is well known to them locally as not being the sort

of person calculated to further any movement of this kind. And these people who have petitioned are, moreover, very often not the most desirable type of applicant. The industrious, thrifty, plodding man just goes on from day to day 'beholden' to no one, and not wishing to incur the risk of any form of enmity amongst his 'betters' by doing such a daring thing as applying in glaring publicity to a public body, and thereby showing any discontent with his present lot. In the privacy of the agent's office he may 'bespeak' one of the few small holdings of the neighbourhood when it should fall in—one, perhaps, amongst a dozen similar applications. He may even be looked upon kindly, his merit recognized, and a promise given of the first chance. So for years he plods on again with this hope to keep him going; but the present occupier lives on, and the holding is not vacant until this man himself has reached an age when it is of no further use for him to begin on such a venture.

But the man who has no scruples about applying is often of a different type. It may be that he is merely more enlightened as to his rights, and is independent enough not to mind the possible stigma of 'agitating.' On the other hand, he may be of that type of unsuccessful worker with an eye to the main chance, who sees a loophole for bettering himself, at other people's expense, for the immediate moment. He is generally plausible, and can state his case more glibly than the slow,

plodding type. His case very likely may not have a leg to stand upon, and he is informed 'that the Council cannot entertain his application'; or that 'his application is not within the terms of the Act'; or that the Council 'does not consider itself justified in putting the Act in force for a single application.'

The Council probably have been right in their decisions; but they have dealt a death-blow in that district to further applications from the more suitable men watching in the background.

Or, it may be, the Committee decide that the petition is 'on good faith and reasonable grounds.' An inquiry is held; the Act is explained to the assembled applicants; they all want to rent land, but it is pointed out to them that the Act thinks it best for them to purchase and lay down what is for them a large sum as a deposit. The land will be theirs in fifty years' time; 'and a lot of good it will do me then,' says the man who has already struggled to his fortieth or even his thirtieth year. When the freehold is acquired, it is further explained that if the land be diverted from agriculture they may not sell except to the County Council, or to the man from whom the land was originally bought, or to the man holding the next plot. The restrictions, only understood in so far as they seem to affect their freedom, frighten them. For men living from week to week, they seem to be binding themselves to something irrevocable and unsatisfactory. They think it is safer to back



out while they can and get along as they were before.

In due course the Sub-Committee report, and the Council gravely state in their resolutions :

‘The applications were withdrawn, and no further action was therefore taken in the matter.’

That neighbourhood has been settled. The Council had done its best, and no doubt are now ‘awaiting further applications.’

#### PURCHASING BIAS OF THE ACT.

It has been already mentioned that the demands of all applicants for land have been almost invariably to hire and not to purchase it.

In the first place, the Council is only authorized to lease land itself ‘where land, through its proximity to a town or suitability for building purposes, or for any other special reason, has a prospective value which in the opinion of the County Council is too high to make its purchase for agricultural purposes desirable.’

This clause can be made a loophole for escape from taking any action—*e.g.*, in the case of Westmorland, where a petition was received in 1899 from seven men who wanted to hire land. The official doom is pronounced as follows :

‘It was not shown that the land applied for was building land, or that there was any special reason why it should be hired under Section 2, other than its accommodation value for agricultural pur-

poses. . . . No sufficient grounds have been shown to justify the Council in putting into operation the provisions of the Act with regard to the hiring of the land on lease.'

Again, by Section 4 (2) of the Act, the Council are empowered to let land to the applicants only where they are of opinion that these are unable to buy. A broad-minded Small Holdings Committee are soon able to decide that the men are unable to buy. It is not a matter of the ability merely of putting down so much money in cash, but whether the money used for payment of this deposit would not be better employed as working capital if they are allowed to hire the land, or whether the payment of the deposit would not cripple them in the case, say, of having to hold on and pay their instalments in the face of one or two bad seasons running. Many present holders under Councils have put this to me: 'I have the money for the deposit, but I want it to tide me over a possible bad season, which otherwise might be the ruin of me. The first year or two you are not likely to get much out of your holding, and you want the bit of money you have saved to help you until a good season puts you well on your legs.'

As it is, the best men often fall between two stools in the hands of a sub-committee who are not really in actual touch with the men's requirements. If the men prove they have money, the Committee decide that they are able to buy, and demur about letting them land (*vide* Wiltshire

County Council Report on Broad Chalke Petition).

If they maintain they have no money they are likely to be reported on as 'labouring men, and the Sub-Committee are of opinion that in case of adverse circumstances they could not be answerable for the rent' (*vide* Dorset County Council).

#### COMPULSORY POWERS.

It is often asserted that it is chiefly the absence of compulsory powers to acquire land which has made the Act such a dead-letter. It would be as well, therefore, to examine the 'official' reasons given above in connection with this point.

It is probable that in most of the following cases where petitions failed the presence of such powers would have caused the Act to be put in operation :

Six petitions where 'no land was available.'

Five petitions where 'the men were unwilling to accept the Council's terms' (*i.e.*, because the fact of a public body wanting land sent its price up so high that the Council were unable to acquire and adapt it at a price which would be remunerative to the men).

One petition where 'the available area was too large.'

Three petitions where 'the land was too high priced.'

Thirteen petitions where 'the owners refused to entertain any advances by the County Council, or made unreasonable conditions.'

Besides which we might include several petitions where the reason given for failure was that the Committee decided that the petition was not made on 'reasonable grounds'—*i.e.*, the petitioners could not point to any available land.

It is further argued in favour of compulsion that its moral effect would be valuable, and would probably lead to a satisfactory arrangement without actual recourse to compulsion.

This has been proved to be the case in respect of the compulsory powers allowed to Parish Councils for the acquisition of land for allotments by the Local Government Act of 1894.

Many landowners are willing to arrange for the creation of small holdings on their estates, but are prevented from doing so by the opposition they meet from their larger tenants, who threaten to give up the whole farm if any part is taken from them.

I grant that there is a large amount of land continually in the market. If it is not, however, at the exact time or place of petitions, the matter drops; and later, if any comes into the market, no fresh petition is sent in if a previous one has been a failure. Also, if a public authority has to buy in the open market the value is enhanced, owing to the necessary publicity in holding local inquiries.

If compulsory powers were used, the value would be fixed by arbitration.

Again, cases are known where, even when land is to be let in a neighbourhood, and the Local

Authority has offered the most satisfactory terms, pure prejudice has prevented the land from being hired to them.

There is also the case where the whole of a village or district is owned by one man, who absolutely refuses to meet the local requirements, although the men have proved themselves competent and successful on what land they have got.

It remains, however, to be considered whether the methods of the County Council would be much affected by granting them compulsory powers.

It would in most cases be simply placing these powers in the hands of the very men who most strongly object to them. Even those members who would be inclined to act upon them would certainly be handicapped by the fact that it would often mean using them against their own neighbours, landlords, or tenants. It is to meet these reasons that the legislation suggested on page 65 has been framed.

#### DIFFICULTIES FROM THE COUNTY COUNCILS' POINT OF VIEW.

\*One aspect of the difficulties in working the Act from the point of view of the County Councils themselves seems very clearly indicated in the following report of the Small Holdings Committee of the Wiltshire County Council, of which many of the members were of most progressive tendencies, and

appear to have done their best to put the Act into operation :

‘ . . . Even had they been able to come to an agreement with the owner, your Committee would have felt it their duty to bring before the most serious consideration of the Council the question whether it is expedient for the Council to purchase land—especially, as in the present instance, arable land—when the Petitioners, or the greater number of them, apply to be allowed to lease, and not to become owners of, their holdings. If this course is followed, the Council may in course of time find itself the landlord of a number of small properties scattered over the whole county, having in its service no officers to watch the cultivation or even to collect the rents, continually liable to loss from the non-payment of rent, from the deterioration of land, from bad cultivation (and while many of the small holders will cultivate their land well, this cannot be expected in every instance), from loss also when compensation has to be paid to an outgoing tenant, which the incoming tenant either cannot or will not meet.

‘ The Act requires that the county shall incur no loss from putting it into operation, and, to guarantee it against loss, a rent will have to be put on the land that few applicants for small holdings will be disposed to pay, while, in the case of sale, no more need be asked than is sufficient to recoup the Council in the expense actually incurred.

‘ The Small Holdings Act also clearly contem-

plates the creation of small freeholds, and to facilitate this object requires only one-fifth of the purchase money to be paid down. Your Committee would certainly recommend that, as a rule, no petition be acceded to where the large majority of the petitioners are not prepared to become purchasers, land being offered to let only in a few and comparatively exceptional instances.

‘Your Committee would wish also to point out the difficulty they are in in negotiating with an owner, in consequence of their being unable to make him a definite offer, their power under the Act being limited to recommending the purchase to the Council; and the further difficulty that they can come to no terms with petitioners till they know the price they will have to pay the owner, while the Council cannot with safety agree to a price with the owner till it can be assured that the terms agreed on with the petitioners will guarantee it against loss.’

In this particular case the two points brought out are, in the first instance, the fear of loss; and, secondly, the difficulties in actual negotiation.

It is probable that if the risk of incurring a charge on the rates was removed from the County Council, and that they were merely administrators of a grant from a national fund, they would be found less unwilling to consider possible undertakings. This question is now recognized as a national one; therefore, until at any rate a system of small holdings has been actually created, it may be

argued that it should be financed with national funds. It is not proposed that County Councils should have a free hand with such funds, but that schemes should be carried out through them under the auspices of a national body.

There is, however, more than this to consider. County Councillors have already as much business to transact as they can well manage. To carry out any small-holding scheme on an adequate scale means a devotion of time and labour which cannot reasonably be expected of busy men. It is, moreover, a subject requiring expert knowledge. Most County Councillors representing the more rural districts have just sufficient knowledge to be aware that they are not experts; this makes them hesitate the more to embark on any scheme of which they realize the great necessity of judicious handling with adequate experience.

### CONSIDERATION OF THE CASES WHERE NO PETITIONS HAVE BEEN PRESENTED TO COUNTY COUNCILS.

In the return of 1895, forty-five counties are returned as having received no petitions. Since that date petitions have been received in three other counties—viz., Westmorland, Leicester, and Hunts.

To anyone unacquainted with the real facts of the case this would seem to be due to a want of



desire in those counties for small holdings. Whatever else the reasons may be, this is most certainly not the true one, if you take the counties as a whole.

An indication has already been given of the reasons which make the agricultural man distrust the effectiveness of applications. A want of definite knowledge of the Act itself is no doubt another strong reason.

In some cases the County Councils, however, have gone so far as to circulate notices of the Act. Gloucester prepared a pamphlet showing the procedure to be followed by persons desirous of acquiring a small holding, and sent a notice to all the Parish and District Councils requesting information about any cases where there was a demand. It, however, only received three applications; an arrangement was made in one case, and the two others were dropped.

Cheshire communicated the effect of the Act to all Urban and Sanitary Authorities and Boards of Guardians, inviting applications. It, however, received none from this source. Somerset circulated an analysis of the Act, but only two applications were received.

In the face of these statements an outsider would have just cause to suppose that there was no demand amongst the people themselves. One proof, however, that this is not a true test is that Worcestershire also, in early days, sent out over 2,000 notices on the Act, and received only two

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applications in response. It did not, however, like the above Councils, let the matter rest there, and its further action has been amply justified by results.

But even in these cases where the Council have circulated knowledge of the Act the effect is not very far-reaching. Amongst the agricultural population, not many go out of their way to read the single notice on the police-station, and where it is simply sent to the smaller Local Authorities—especially Boards of Guardians—the matter is not likely to get any further.

Apart, however, from want of knowledge, there are the other reasons already indicated which make it unlikely that the agricultural man will do anything on his own initiative. These are: The publicity necessary in the nature of the application; the want of encouragement from the result of applications already made; the general lack of combination amongst the labourers, resulting in the feeling that it is next to impossible for one man to move in the matter.

In this connection it is interesting to contrast the methods and results of the Lincolnshire Small Holdings Association.

This Association leases 650 acres of land from Lord Carrington, and sublets it to 202 persons. It has been working eleven years (in providing small holdings as distinguished from allotments). In that time, it will be observed, it has acquired land amounting to just the same acreage as that

acquired by all the County Councils in their first eleven years, and has dealt with 202 persons against their 228.

Instead of sending round long-winded notices to Local Authorities, or sticking them up on police-stations, it inserts in the local papers the following intelligible advertisement :

‘SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE SMALL HOLDINGS ASSOCIATION.

‘The above Association is prepared to receive applications from persons residing in the several parishes in South Lincolnshire who are desirous of hiring small holdings up to 60 acres in extent, either with or without houses.

‘Forms of application will be sent on receipt of a post-card addressed to the steward, Mr. J. H. DIGGLE, Moulton, Spalding. All information will be treated as confidential.

‘R. WINFREY,  
‘Chairman.’

The result of this has been over 2,000 applications in a few months.

Contrast with this the two applications apiece from the notices of four County Councils.

## PRESENT POWERS OF LOCAL BODIES.

Before considering suggestions for amended legislation, it may be well to recall what powers are actually possessed at the present time by the various local bodies for the creation of holdings. The following table shows that under certain conditions it is possible for small holdings, as dis-

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tinguished from allotments, to be created under the Parish Council :

	Mode of Acquiring Land.	Whether by Agreement or Compulsion.	Mode of Disposing of Land.	Size of Holdings.
County Councils	Can purchase or (under certain conditions) hire	By agreement only if for <i>small holdings</i> ; by agreement or compulsion if for <i>allotments</i> , on requisition of Parish Councils ;	And, if for small holdings, sell or (under certain conditions) let, or (if for allotments) assure to Parish Council for letting,	In holdings of one to fifty acres if for small holdings; up to one acre if for allotments.
District Councils	Can purchase or hire	By agreement or (in case of purchase) compulsion on obtaining order from County Council,	And let	In holdings up to one acre.
Parish Councils	Can purchase or hire	By agreement or (in case of hiring) by compulsion on obtaining order from County Council,	And let	If land purchased, in holdings up to one acre; if land hired compulsorily, in holdings up to four acres of pasture, or one of arable and three of pasture; if land hired by agreement, in holdings of any size.

PRESENT POWERS OF PARISH COUNCILS TO  
ACQUIRE LAND FOR SMALL HOLDINGS.

Under the Local Government Act of 1894, if a Parish Council are satisfied that allotments are required and are unable to obtain the land at a reasonable rent, they can represent the case to the County Council, who will then have to hold a public inquiry. If the County Council are satisfied that allotments are required, they may make an order granting the Parish Council a lease of the required land at a rent to be fixed by an arbitrator. In case of *compulsory* hiring, the area of one allotment must not exceed 3 acres of pasture and 1 acre of arable land.

If, however, a Parish Council can hire land by voluntary arrangement with any local landowner, the Local Government Act places no limit to the size of the holding and the Parish Council may relet the land in holdings of any size that appears suitable. In this way small holdings may be created.\*

In view of the reasons stated on p. 63, as to the inadvisability of merely giving County Councils compulsory powers, it has been suggested that greater powers should be placed in the hands of Parish Councils by removing the present limit as to the size of the allotments which they may let in cases where the land has been acquired compulsorily ; or, in other words, to give them further

\* For account of holdings held under the Parish Councils of Belbroughton and Castle Morton, see Appendix.

powers for taking action in the first instance ; and, further, to give them the right of appeal to the Board of Agriculture, through a body of Small Holdings Commissioners, where the Council took no steps.

As stated by Mr. C. R. Buxton in his evidence to the Small Holdings Committee, whose report has just been issued : ‘ This is not a demand for giving power of acquiring land to bodies which have not previously possessed them, it being already an accepted principle of our legislation to give powers of acquiring agricultural land to County, District, and Parish Councils alike. Nor is it a demand for new compulsory powers, but merely for the extension of existing compulsory powers to holdings of a somewhat larger size.’

The suggestions for amended legislation which are advocated by the Co-operative Small Holdings Society, of which Mr. Buxton is chairman of the Executive Committee, are as follows :

1. District and Parish Councils should have power (by an amendment of the Local Government Act, 1894) to apply to the County Council for an order for the compulsory hiring or purchase of land, without any limit to the size of the holdings into which it may be divided. The land should be hired or purchased by the County Council and ‘ assured ’ to the District or Parish Council for management.

2. County Councils (in addition to the power to grant the order above mentioned, and to assure land to District or Parish Councils) should have

power in any case (by an amendment of the Small Holdings Act, 1892)—

- (a) Compulsorily to purchase land for small holdings, or to hire it where desirable ;
- (b) To let, as well as sell, holdings up to 50 acres.

3. A permanent body of Small Holdings Commissioners with power—

- (a) To facilitate the working of the Allotments, Small Holdings, and Housing Acts in rural districts ;
- (b) To administer grants made from the Consolidated Fund (which would bring their work under the review of Parliament) ;
- (c) To purchase or hire land in the same manner as the County Councils, and to develop it themselves or leave it to Local Authorities for local management ;
- (d) To act as a court of appeal in the event of the County Council failing to take action.

Copies of these were sent to Parliamentary candidates of all parties previous to the General Election, with the request that they should give them their support. A large number of candidates, including seventy members of the new House of Commons, gave satisfactory assurances on all points.

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED  
AMENDED LEGISLATION.

The chief objections raised by those opposed to any legislative reform in connection with the creation of small holdings are concentrated on any form of compulsion, and on any further extension of Parish Council powers.

The insertion of a compulsory clause in the Small Holdings Act has already been considered, and the arguments for it in connection with the County Council were brought forward.

Let us, now, further consider the proposals for compulsion in connection with the proposed suggestions for reform.

The two chief points which are maintained by the opposing side are :

1. That landowners are willing to make voluntary arrangements for the provision of land to public bodies for the purpose of small holdings.

2. That enough land comes naturally into the market, and that a compulsory clause is therefore unnecessary.

It has already been shown how the largest percentage of petitions failed through inability to treat with the respective landowners.

As regards the second point, it is certainly true that land is continually in the market which might be used with great advantage for small-holding purposes. But the fact remains that it is not so



used when the time of its sale is not coincident with the date of an application. Moreover, if such land is to be made use of in connection with any scheme for small holdings, it can only be done profitably by buying quietly. This is quite impossible in the case of a public body, and in face of all the preliminary public inquiries entailed. But it is conceivable that much could be accomplished by anyone so in touch with local requirements and with such sufficient local knowledge as to have ear-marked any farms or estates suitable for small holdings, and who would be ready to buy them without publicity when they came into the market. In connection with this knowledge of estates, there should be a register kept of all men wanting land, and their requirements for every district.

It is possible that a body of suitable Small Holdings Commissioners could fulfil these functions to such a degree that, by satisfying applications, they would confine merely to its moral pressure the power conferred by compulsory clauses for acquisition of land.

REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL  
COMMITTEE ON SMALL HOLDINGS,  
1906.

In 1905 the Board of Agriculture appointed a Departmental Committee 'to inquire into the administration and working of the Small Holdings Act of 1892, to examine the various arrangements made by landowners in recent years for the provision of smaller agricultural holdings, and to report as to the conditions under which such holdings are most likely to be attended with success; and as to the measures which may most advantageously be taken, either by legislation, co-operative association, or otherwise, to secure the increase of their number.'

This Committee has recently reported. As regards the amendment of the Small Holdings Act, there are no proposals as to compulsory powers in any form. The suggestions are chiefly confined to various points for making the terms of purchase easier for the small man, and for removing some of the restrictions which tend to cramp the sense of ultimate ownership. They evidently take the line of believing that the Act itself is workable, but that, owing to misconceptions as to its reading, it has not been fairly tested. They draw the attention of County Councils to the strained views these bodies take as to various clauses—*e.g.*, as to waiting to act until they receive petitions; as to the petition having to apply to specific lands in a specific dis-

strict, and not be general ; and as to the necessity of the subsequent inquiry being both public and local.

They recommend 'that an annual inquiry be made by each County Council Small Holdings Committee from the minor authorities within the county as to what land is occupied by small holders, whether there is a demand for further land, and whether there is any land available.' They further suggest that the Small Holdings Committee of a County Council should be made to report as to why, or why not, the circumstances of the county would justify the Council putting into operation Part I. of the Act.

As far as these suggestions go, they are wisely considered and likely to stimulate to some degree the members of those County Councils who are anxious to do something in this direction. But there the matter ends. Sir Francis Channing, in a supplementary report, states the other side of the case so clearly that I cannot do better than quote him in full on this point :

'It is a grave defect in the Report that no suggestion is made to extend the powers of Local Authorities for the acquisition of land. Whether a Central Authority is created, or State loans to landowners under proper conditions are authorized or not, it should be recognized that both in the provision and in the supervision of small holdings local representative authorities must discharge important functions.

‘Mr. Willis Bund’s proposals to amend the Act of 1892 by giving compulsory powers to County Councils to hire as well as purchase land deserve the consideration of Parliament. It is absurd that the Parish Council should have compulsory power to hire, and the District Council to purchase, land for allotments, and the County Council be left without either of these powers for a purpose less easy of attainment. Compulsory powers, if too costly for frequent use, at least tend to bring about acquisition by agreement.’\*

#### RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION BY CENTRAL AUTHORITY.

The Committee further suggest the formation of special branches of the Board of Agriculture ‘to make definite experiments in the creation of small holdings,’ for which Parliament be invited to make an annual grant. The Board of Agriculture is to have compulsory powers for the purchase of land, but not to hire.

It is certainly a step in advance to recognize the necessity for action of a Central Authority, but it is to be regretted that its powers are not more

\* Sir Francis Channing has himself introduced a Bill for amending the Act of 1892. He confers compulsory powers for acquiring land on County, Urban, and Rural District Authorities; he further provides that in the event of the County Council refusing to take action appeal may be made to the Board of Agriculture, who themselves, if the Council is still recalcitrant, shall have power to acquire land and adapt it.

correlated with those of the Local Authorities. Here, again, I would quote from Sir Francis Channing's supplementary report :

‘The Report suggests that competent local advisers may volunteer to help the Central Authority in selecting the men and supervising the management of the land. But I submit that these questions of local administration need more precise handling ; and, with a large increase of small holdings, the work of supervision and management will be immensely increased.

‘Some effective machinery for local supervision and management, fully representing local requirements, and with an exact grasp of local conditions, is, in my opinion, essential to sound working. This will in many cases be best done by the Local Authority ; in other cases by co-operative societies.’

The Committee do not define precisely what they mean by the ‘definite experiments’ which the proposed Central Authority is to undertake. It is maintained by those who have studied the small-holding system as it exists in England to-day that, given proper conditions, small holdings need not be experimented about ; they are a proved success, and where they have apparently failed it is often due to the fact that the economic causes affecting them have not had free play. The natural supply to the existing demand is in so many cases withheld by the working of our land laws and customs, that, while these laws and customs survive, we must have recourse to counter-legislation to supply the

demand. This is the justification for an artificial creation of holdings, in spite of those evils which follow in its train—evils which would not arise if the supply of holdings was left to the free play of supply and demand on commercial lines. The only way to minimize these evils is by framing our methods of artificial creation to approximate as closely as possible to a natural supply. This is not done by ‘making definite experiments.’ It is done by giving that ‘variety of initiative’ and that elasticity of method which would be gained by increased powers to the various Local Authorities, each dealing with its own demand, with a full knowledge of its own local conditions and requirements.

At the same time, the question of rural repopulation being a national one, the action of a Central Authority is called for, and the use of national funds; but as surely as this Central Authority is required to make the action of Local Authorities effective for the nation, so is the help of Local Authorities required to make the work of the Central Authority effective for the district.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IX

### SMALL HOLDINGS AT CASTLE MORTON, WORCESTERSHIRE.

CASTLE MORTON is a widely scattered village bordering an unenclosed common of 600 acres. It is four and a half miles south of Malvern Wells Station and seven miles north of Tewkesbury.

The parish of 3,694 acres is mostly in the hands of a few large farmers holding under Lady Henry Somerset and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners; that is to say, six men hold about 1,400 acres, five average about 70 acres, and fifty have holdings from 3 to 20 acres. There are about sixty cottagers, with an average of  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre of land, who, being near the common, are able to turn stock out on it; they are, however, for the most part tied to the farmers, and in some cases are under a week's notice.

There are a certain number of small freeholds. These were probably original squatters, paying an acknowledgment to the Lord of the Manor. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners bought much of the property some years ago, and many of these small

people took the opportunity which was then offered to them of enfranchising themselves. Some of these small freeholds have been bought up by tradespeople from neighbouring towns, who charge rents up to £5 an acre. There is a decided tendency in the neighbourhood for the small freeholds to be bought out of the small-holding class.

*Price of Land, Rents, etc.*—The average rents of the district are :

For farms from 150 to 400 acres	...	12s. to 18s. an acre.
„ up to 50 acres	...	£1 10s. an acre.
„ „ 20 „	...	£2 an acre.
„ „ 10 „	...	£2 10s. an acre.
„ „ 3 and 4 acres	...	£3 and £4 an acre, and up to £6.

The rates work out at 2s. an acre for large farms and 7s. on the smaller farms, the former being assessed at an average of 15s. an acre and the latter at £3 an acre.

The sale of several small freeholds in the district during recent years, amounting to 31 acres, shows an average price of £50 an acre. A farm of between 400 and 500 acres a few years ago was sold at about £11 an acre. It had originally been four farms, but had been let to one tenant for some years. The price included four houses and some tumble-down cottages. If it had been put up in the original four lots it is probable that a far larger price could have been realized, and as many small men in the district who were in a position to go on to a larger farm would have benefited by it.



*Soil and Cultivation of the District.*—The soil at the southern end of the parish is a red clay and marl ; at the northern end it is more of a gravelly clay, and on the higher ground a stony brash. Wheat and beans are the principal cultivated crops.

The smaller holdings are farmed in connection with the common rights for turning out sheep and cattle. The land is mostly under pasture, and there is always a grass orchard of apple, pear, and plum trees. The small bits of arable are used for growing winter keep for the stock. As a rule one or two milking-cows are kept, the calves being sold as yearlings and the milk made into butter. Many of the men buy Welsh colts in Hereford Fair for turning out on the common. Poultry are very largely gone in for, Malvern supplying a good market. Nearly all the small people make cider, supplementing their own apples with purchases in Herefordshire. Unfortunately, the sale of cider has been very much restricted since the introduction of tied public-houses.

*The Parish Council Small Holdings.*—The Parish Council has now 220 acres let out in small holdings to seventy tenants.

The land is taken in three lots of 100, 80, and 40 acres respectively, situated at different sides of the parish. As the parish is exceedingly scattered and is several miles in length, this is an extremely satisfactory arrangement, as it enables the villagers in the different parts to have the holdings near their own homes.

One lot of 100 acres is situated at the northern

end of the parish, bordering the common. It had been taken over in a very foul condition, and much of it is poor, stony land. It is taken on a twenty-one years' lease from Lady Henry Somerset at a rental of 12s. an acre. The Parish Council pay all rates, and let the land at rents varying from 12s. to 28s., according to the situation and quality. They have always a working balance of £5 to £20 in hand. The men pay up very well. They are fined 1s. if the rent is not paid on the audit day, and there is a rule, which there has been no occasion to enforce, that the land will be forfeited by fourteen days' arrears.

On this land there is a good piece of meadow, which is let out in five 3-acre lots at 28s. an acre, the Parish Council doing the fencing. Pieces of tillage on much poorer land have been laid down to pasture by the men themselves, and held at rents varying from 12s. to 18s. In these cases the men put up their own post-and-wire fencing, and one or two have erected sheds.

A 30-acre tillage field is let out in 1 and 2 acre lots. Most of the men hold more than one such lot, besides the 3 acres of pasture mentioned above; in fact, eighteen or twenty individual tenants hold as much as 5 and 6 acres. The arable lots are all cultivated in much the same way. Wheat and beans, for home consumption and pig-feeding, appear to be the prevailing crops; there are also potatoes, peas, rye grass and clover, and vetches. A second field of tillage is let out in 1-acre lots at 16s. an acre.

As one often hears it stated that the small men

are only content with the best land off a larger farm, it is interesting to note that the whole of this lot was the worst piece of a larger farm, which was let to the Parish Council in a very bad condition, and that it is now well cultivated and clean for the most part. The Parish Council tenants are all men with some other occupation, or men on small grass holdings, to whom the acquisition of an arable allotment is of great benefit, inasmuch as it enables them to work their original holdings more economically.

As an example of the class of tenant, the holder of one lot has a freehold of 5 acres. He keeps a pony and two cows and has sheep on the common ; he does occasional job work. Another man goes out sheep-shearing and pig-killing and faggoting. His Parish Council land enables him to fill up his spare time profitably, when, without land, he would have been out of work. On one of his plots he was growing peas for Malvern Market.

Of the same type was a small dealer, who bought up fruit and poultry in the district for Worcester Market, and worked his holding at odd times.

One tenant works regularly at a stone-quarry. He turns out young cattle on the common, and his allotment ground enables him to eke out the 2½ acres of land attached to his own cottage.

*Reasons of Success.*—The reasons for the success of small holdings in this locality appear to be those usually found in districts where common rights exist or have existed.

A race of small holders, emanating from original

squatters, has been bred up, with the characteristic hard-working and thrifty qualities associated with this class, and enabled to survive as small people by the advantages derived from the supplementing of their holdings by common rights. The district being purely agricultural, the descendants of these men are brought up as agriculturists, and are continually in want of the land, which they have been trained to cultivate in the methods found most suitable for their district.

One result of this is that the competition for a small holding is so great that the rents paid are out of all proportion to the amount paid on the larger farms. The small man, however, even when paying £3 and £4 an acre for the same class of land which a large man gets for under £1, is able, not only to live, but in many cases to save enough to go on to a larger farm in course of time—and this also where he pays 7s. rates where the larger man pays 2s.

In view of these facts—viz. : (1) that there is a very great demand for small holdings ; (2) that the men show that they are able to work them successfully at this high rent—it can fairly be argued that the cost of putting up and maintaining cottages and buildings and fencing to meet this well-established demand would be met by the increased amount received in rent for the land.

The extent of the demand at present existing in this neighbourhood is shown by the fact that there were sixteen applicants for 4 acres which the Parish Council last had to let, and the tenant had

to be chosen by ballot. There is also keen competition for some charity grass land, which the men willingly pay £3 an acre for, although there is no water on it or proper entrance.

There are at present three large farms belonging to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in the parish. One of these is let at 14s. an acre. If 140 acres of it were let out to the twenty odd men who are now clamouring for land and are able to stock it, there is no doubt that a very much higher rent would be received by the Commissioners.

*Benefits of Small Holdings.*—There are many instances to be found here of small men who have been enabled to rise to the position of farmers through the advantage of having had a small piece of land to start with.

Since the Parish Council took up the question in 1894, there has also been a marked improvement in the character of the men. There was prior to this much poaching and fowl-stealing, owing to the poverty of the district, cases of which are now rarely known.

The special benefit of the land provided by the Parish Council appears to be twofold.

First, where it supplies additional land at from 14s. to £1 an acre to those small holders who are now paying from £2 to £4 for their cottage holdings, this helps to bring down the rent of all their land to a more reasonable value.

Secondly, where it supplies men at other occupations with a small amount of land, it enables them to grow wheat for their own bread, and enough

food to fatten a couple of pigs for home consumption, and at the same time they are filling up their spare time in a manner calculated to supply them with experience, should they have a chance later of getting on to a holding.

As regards the effect of supplying the demand for land on the population, the following figures speak for themselves :

Up to 1891 the population had decreased from 950 to 720. The allotments were obtained in 1894. By 1901 the population had risen to 795.

*Parish Council Powers.*—The Parish Council of Castle Morton is one of the few instances where their powers have been used to acquire small holdings as distinguished from allotments.

The work that has been done here and the manner in which it has been carried out would seem fully to justify extension of their powers in this direction. It has been urged that the members of the Parish Council are men of limited ideas, swayed by private and local prejudices, and that if further powers are to be given to anybody it should be to the County Council, whose members are more likely to be impartial.

But County Council members have not got that local knowledge and interest, especially the knowledge of one another, which is so essential in this matter ; and, *as a rule*, coming as they do from a particular class, their ideas on the subject of supplying land to smaller men are limited and prejudiced to a degree which their superior education and standing seems unable to dispel.

The Parish Councillor has the eyes of the whole parish on him: he stands or falls according to his actions before a community with whom he is in intimate connection; and in this question of land, if you take Castle Morton as an example, there is no keener critic than the working man himself, both in connection with the handling of public funds and in the selection of suitable tenants.

#### SMALL HOLDINGS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL AT BELBROUGHTON.

Belbroughton is situated six miles north-west of Bromsgrove and six miles east of Kidderminster, and fourteen miles from Birmingham. It is a village of 1,850 inhabitants, a large number of whom are employed in a local manufactory of scythes, hay and chaff knives, and edge tools.

In 1895 the Rector, the Rev. J. H. Eld, helped the Parish Council to acquire 18 acres of land, under the Allotments Act of 1890, which were relet to thirty tenants. The rent paid amounted to £45, and the amount received from the lots was £49 10s., and was paid in advance. Starting with this small working balance, the Parish Council was able during the next eight years to hire about 180 acres of land, at a total rental of £268 10s., which are relet to seventy-five tenants at a rent of £359 12s. 4d. The following table shows the rate at which this was done:

Date.	Number of Acres.	Number of Tenants.	Rent paid.			Rent received.		
			£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1895	18	30	45	0	0	49	10	0
1896	16	21	24	0	0	32	13	4
1897	105	35	140	0	0	198	5	0
—	(two farms) 5	10	12	10	0	14	0	0
1903	35	22	41	0	0	58	8	0
—	4	8	6	0	0	6	16	0
	180	Total number of tenants 75, many holding more than one lot.	268	10	0	359	12	4

The total 180 acres held by the Council averages £1 14s. an acre rent. The tenants pay from £1 10s. to £3 6s., the latter high figure being due to the fact that one lot of 15 acres is sublet to the Council for £3 by a tenant farmer, who himself only pays £1 10s. for it. It was, however, the only means of getting any land. Some of the men holding these expensive lots have other lots at £1 10s., which brings the average of their total rent down to a more possible figure.

The chief items of expense which have to be paid for out of the difference between the rent paid to the landlord and that received from the tenants seem to be compensation (in the first instance) and fencing.

£95 has been spent in compensation and lawyer's bills on the five farms. During the nine years which the Council has held the farm of 105 acres



about £300 has been spent in labour, fencing, and drainage alone. The fencing on the whole area held by the Council now comes to about £10 annually; the Council also paints the outside of the houses and buildings every five years, and the inside of the houses every seven years.

The Parish Council up to the present have been able to do this out of the balance of the rents received, and there seems to be no reason why they should not continue in the same state of prosperity, the land and fences being improved every year.

The land is not held at Belbroughton, but around the village of Fairfield, which is three miles south-east of Belbroughton, on the road from Stourbridge to Bromsgrove.

The cultivation of the plots is a sort of mixture of agricultural crops with market-gardening, in which strawberries play the largest part. Not much hand labour is done, the crops being largely broccoli, cabbage, beans, peas, parsnips, carrots, etc., for which the land can be worked with implements. Wallflowers and narcissi are grown on some of the plots. Corn and vetches are grown for the keep of the horse and pony which most of the small people have to take their produce into Birmingham. All the produce goes in by road, the carts bringing back a load of manure, which can be got from 1s. to 1s. 6d. in Birmingham. The great idea is not to come back with an empty cart; and if the manure is not wanted for home use it can be sold on the spot for from 7s. to 8s.

From 5 to 6 acres is said to be wanted for a living—some put it at 4 acres—and to be the size a man

can work with his family. Many of the men have as much as this by having several plots in different parts, either on Parish Council land or some of it held independently. The larger number, however, have only about half this amount, and are therefore not able to work what they have as economically as if they had the full area, which would fill up their time and make the keeping of a horse worth while. They supplement their holdings by buying up fields of produce off the larger farmers for retailing in Birmingham, and by hauling manure for others. Many of the farmers round now rely on these small men to dispose of fields of potatoes, carrots, roots, etc., to whom they sell them as a standing crop.

Strawberries seem to be the main crop which is relied on for bringing in cash. As much as £100 has been cleared off 2 acres under this cultivation after all expenses have been paid. The plants are left down as a rule for four years.

Two farmhouses have been let, with  $13\frac{1}{2}$  and  $14\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land respectively.

On one, where the land is grass, with  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres of arable, the present holder is also a small cattle-dealer. On the other the first tenant under the Parish Council had most of the land under strawberries, and did well enough in a short time to be able to move on to a larger farm in the district, of £200 rental.

Out of the seventy-five tenants, twenty-seven are dependent on their holdings for a living; they are *all* in want of 2 or 3 more acres each to work their holdings economically and to the best

advantage. The remaining forty-five, who have other occupations, are continually pressing the Parish Council to supply them with more land.

Amongst the men interviewed who had not enough land for a living was a man who had worked as a labourer for nineteen years. He and his son held  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres of the Parish Council land, and were badly in need of more. His son kept a horse and pony, and bought crops off the farmers to retail in Birmingham, and he himself got odd work at hedging, etc., in the winter. Most of their land was in strawberries and corn.

Another young man, who was the successful applicant for a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -acre lot out of seven others, was the son of a nail-maker, and had a horse and cart, which he used for buying up produce and reselling. He was an instance of how a young single man could begin in this way, and gradually get more land of his own to cultivate in spare time.

There were two cases where original allottees under the Parish Council had moved on to small holdings provided by the County Council at Catshill, a mile or two distant. Their work on the Parish Council land had proved invaluable as a preliminary training.

In comparing this district and the methods of working the small holdings with other places where the same sort of cultivation is carried on, one notices the following points :

1. That there are at the present time no particular local industries or forms of employment of a different nature, the men using their holdings as adjuncts, to fall back upon ; but amongst those

men who have not enough land for a living, whilst some of them may be working regularly for wages, the larger number, as well as many who are said to be making an entire living on the land, earn their extra money in actual connection with small holdings—viz., by buying other supplies, as described, and bringing back in their empty carts loads of manure to sell after taking the produce into Birmingham.

The conditions are here reversed as to what one usually finds—viz., the larger men in the market-garden and fruit industry supplementing their own supplies by buying from small men.

2. The cultivation is not of a very high standard or very intensive; the soil is not very good, nor the climate forward. It is no doubt the proximity of Birmingham as a market which makes up for these deficiencies; but at the same time one is surprised to find the same acreage quoted as being necessary for a living as at Evesham, with its fertile soil and very intense and high-class system of market-gardening. As a matter of fact, the explanation probably is that these men do not live so entirely off their holdings as do the Evesham men, but supplement their returns in the ways indicated.

The place is a striking instance of the benefit conferred on a poverty-stricken district by the supply of land to small people.

Here, as at Catshill, most of the population had been nail-makers, and were thrown out of employment by the introduction of machinery. The men were rapidly becoming demoralized through extreme

poverty, and were continually before the magistrates for poaching and thieving; a very large number were on the rates, and doles of bread and soup were regularly given by the Squire of the parish in winter. There were threatenings of organized strikes if something was not done. The men themselves were keen to get land, as, living in the country, they all possessed some knowledge of cultivation.

Since the possession of land by the Parish Council the men appear to be all reformed characters, and those who were formerly on the rates are now contributing to them. The village schoolmistress testifies to the improved condition of the children, who are now well fed and well clothed, and on a higher level of intelligence.

Besides being of benefit to the actual tenants, this undertaking gives an impulse to other trades. A local maker of small carts and lorries used by the men has already retired with a fortune. As an illustration of the demand for these, on one farm of 50 acres, which originally gave employment to two men, I was told that there are now forty horses and carts in use.

As regards the land itself, on one farm of 35 acres a man had failed to pay any rent for two years, and the land was in a very bad condition. The Council have repaired all the hedges, gates, etc., and have taken the land on a yearly tenancy, with the understanding that they will not be disturbed during the present owners' lifetime. It is already in a very different state of cultivation, and is being of untold benefit to twenty tenants.

There is such very keen competition for any land to be let in this district that the Parish Council has a very poor look-in ; and yet more land is very badly needed to enable those men who already have small lots to make the best use of the land itself and their own time. It struck me that they suffered particularly from having too small an area to work to the best advantage.

## CHAPTER X

### PRESENT-DAY EXPERIMENTS

Two experiments have recently been started which are likely to afford valuable experience in the course of the next two or three years as to the possibilities of establishing more men on the land. While they both aim at the settlement of country men, or men who have at some time or other been connected with agriculture or gardening, the methods adopted in each case are very dissimilar. They afford interesting examples of the two ways which are open to those who wish to supply the *bona fide* agriculturist with land on economic lines.

In the one case—viz., that of the Crown lands scheme at Burwell in Cambridgeshire—local men are being supplied with land near their own homes, to be farmed in the ordinary manner of the district already known to them, the acreage given to each being determined by their individual requirements. Existing buildings are being adapted for their use, and only so much capital outlay is being expended as is absolutely necessary for adaptation to the new conditions. The land is leased from the Crown, and the small holders are all subtenants on a yearly lease.

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In the other case—that of the Salvation Army's scheme at Boxted in Essex—an estate has been bought which is being carved up on very definite and arbitrary lines, and without any thought of meeting local requirements or of cultivation on local lines. The idea is rather to induce in a purely agricultural district a definite system of market-gardening cultivation on a co-operative basis which will enable a man to get his entire living off a holding of 5 acres. The estate has been duly chosen with the view of keeping down initial capital expenditure; but every holding is being fully equipped from the start not only with housing accommodation, but with all materials necessary for a man to begin receiving an immediate return. The small holders in this case are to become virtual owners at the end of thirty-three years.

I intend to devote this last chapter of the book to an account of these two schemes, neither of which are yet sufficiently advanced for results to be judged. I consider them, however, singularly fitting subjects to leave for the last consideration of those students of the question who, like myself, are still wondering with open minds what the right lines for future endeavours will prove to be.

### SMALL HOLDINGS ON CROWN LANDS.

Amongst suggestions for the further establishment of small holdings is one for utilizing the Crown lands in this way in those districts where they are found to be suitable for the purpose.



In the return of 1906 the amount of land let by the Crown for agricultural purposes is given as 71,213 acres, of which 4,280 acres were in hand and farmed by bailiffs under the Crown.

This land is distributed over the counties as follows, the acreage being given in round numbers only :

only :			Acres.			Acres.
Bedford	...	...	3,188	Kent	...	3,753
Berks	...	...	824	Lancaster	...	1,440
Bucks	...	...	488	Lincoln	...	13,240
Cambridge	...	...	933	Norfolk	...	196
Dorset	...	...	242	Northants	...	546
Durham	...	...	8	Notts	...	363
Essex	...	...	3,871	Oxford	...	3,708
Gloucester	...	...	776	Suffolk	...	572
Hants	...	...	1,411	Surrey	...	1,754
Hunts	...	...	1,058	Sussex	...	3,583
Wilts	...	...	8,881	York	...	17,736

The following land (included in the above figures) was in hand in 1906 :

		Acres.			Acres.
Hants	...	768	Oxford	...	490½
Kent	...	1,157½	Suffolk	...	572
Lincoln	...	357	Surrey	...	16½
Isle of Wight		...	...	768 acres.	

It will be seen that the amount of land managed by the Crown is very widely spread over different areas throughout England. While much of this might possibly be unsuitable for small holdings, there must be a considerable part of it which would fulfil some of the conditions necessary for success.

By the Crown Lands Act of 1906 the President of the Board of Agriculture becomes *ex officio* a

Commissioner of Woods and Forests, and the land used for agricultural purposes will be administered by the Board of Agriculture.

#### THE BURWELL SMALL HOLDINGS.

Meanwhile, an experiment is being conducted through the private enterprise of a Member of Parliament on some Crown land in Cambridgeshire. Mr. C. D. Rose, M.P. for East Cambridgeshire, has recently taken, on a thirty-one years' lease, 916 acres off the Crown at the village of Burwell, between Newmarket and Cambridge. This land is being divided up and adapted for small holdings entirely at the risk of the Crown tenant, who stands in the position of landlord to the small holders.

The original tenant retired two years ago, and since that time the farm had been in the hands of the Crown agents, and farmed by their bailiff.

The land at some former time had evidently been held in several separate farms, and lies in four main blocks, each containing either a farm-house and buildings or cottages and buildings. For this reason it has been possible to create a certain number of self-contained holdings without doing more in the building line than adapting existing accommodation. The Commissioners have agreed to spend not less than £1,500 in alterations and additions, 4 per cent. interest being charged to Mr. Rose. The estate is bordered by one and a half miles of main road, and

is crossed in places by the accommodation grass roads common to the district.

### SOIL.

The character of the land varies; there are practically two classes of soil, known locally as the 'skirt' land and the 'white' land. The skirt land forms a dividing-line between the regular fen and the white or chalk land. It is a black, peaty soil lying on gault clay, which makes it liable to become waterlogged, and therefore susceptible to frosts. It is subject to a drainage rate of 7s. an acre. It can grow good crops, but these have a tendency to blight in unfavourable seasons, and in some cases the value of the crops obtained is merely sufficient to cover the drainage rate. Three-fourths of the estate belongs to the other category, where the soil consists of a thin layer of strong clay on chalk. There seems to be a diversity of opinion as to its qualities for the purpose of cultivating in small holdings. It is obviously impossible to plough deep without bringing up the chalk, which in unfavourable wet weather causes the soil to bind and set hard. But in suitable seasons, and with a proper knowledge of how to deal with it, good crops can be obtained.

### TYPE OF FARMING.

The type of farming practised locally is chiefly corn-growing and bullock-fattening in open yards. A very large number of pigs are kept.

The new tenants are continuing this style of

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farming on a small scale ; this necessitates a considerable amount of building, which, however, it appears possible to provide by adaptation of existing barns and yards.

### THE NEW TENANTS.

The 916 acres are now let to seventy-five tenants ; besides these, there are thirty allotment holders who already hold a 14-acre field. This brings the total number of men having a share in the 930 acres of Crown land up to 105. Of these, thirteen hold from 25 to 102 acres of land attached to the existing houses and buildings ; twenty-six men living elsewhere hold from 3 to 10 acres, and work their land in connection with other occupations or other land ; the remainder are merely allotment holders.

### APPORTIONMENT OF BUILDINGS.

The buildings have been apportioned as follows : One very large farm-house and a set of buildings situated in the village has been taken by a successful local farmer with 45 acres of the land. This man had forty-nine head of cattle in his yards ; he buys in young stock and sells them out fat.

A large central block of buildings with four adjacent cottages, known as the Slade Farm, have been divided amongst four men holding 35, 40, 55, and 75 acres of land respectively. The large barns have been divided across with wooden partitions, so as to form in each case stabling and a covered yard

for bullocks and pigs. An open yard with sheds has been divided between two who did not get full accommodation in the barns. Two of these men on the largest holdings employ another man regularly.

Another block of land—the Ness Farm—with a house, two cottages, and buildings, accommodates three tenants with 53, 60, and 71 acres of land each. The buildings and yards are being divided between them by means of wooden partitions.

At the Broads Farm there are two cottages and buildings which have been adapted for two tenants holding 36 and 67 acres. Both these men were originally agricultural labourers.

An outlying piece of land, comprising 102 acres with a cottage and buildings, has been let as a whole to one man.

Another small farm-house and buildings, known as the Hall Farm, is to be let to a tenant holding 22 acres.

In dividing up the land adjoining the Ness and Broad Farms it has been tried, where possible, to give each man a portion of white and a portion of skirt land. The grass land on the whole farm also has been carefully apportioned amongst those holding arable land, and has been divided up into twelve lots, with post-and-wire fencing.

The allotment holders have been given fields as near the village as possible, and adjacent to a main road.

The twenty-six men holding from 3 to 10 acres

have also been placed on land bordering the Newmarket road, and in close proximity to the village.

#### CHARACTER OF TENANTS.

Four-fifths of the number of tenants are actually Burwell men; the others are from the adjoining villages or the immediate district. Amongst them, exclusive of mere allotment holders, are 3 farm foremen, 2 innkeepers, 3 butchers, 1 baker, 1 saddler, 1 bricklayer, 1 warehouseman, 1 mail-cart driver, 1 miller's labourer, 2 mechanics, 3 farmer's sons, and 10 agricultural labourers. The remainder are cottagers and cow-keepers already holding a little land, carriers, and turf-diggers. Turf-digging employs quite a number of men in the district. They either buy the land for this purpose outright, or they hire it for a term of years and extract all the turf they can, or they are merely employed to dig by turf merchants. This land, if dug down to the drainage level, subsequently grows sedges, which are used for litter or are chopped up for fodder and sent to London. Besides this occupation, the district offers various other forms of job work, to which the small holding is a valuable adjunct. There are large manure works close to the village, where extra hands are taken on from February to April; there are also cement and brick works. A few men also make a good thing out of driving to Newmarket races. In the twenty-eight days during which they are employed at the different times they can earn up to about £50.

## TERMS OF TENANCY.

The tenants are all yearly. The arable land is let at from 15s. to £1 5s. an acre, the grass land at £1 15s. This rent is fixed 'to cover the lessee's rent to the Crown, interest upon capital outlay, drainage rate, land tax, etc., annual expenses of management, and the preliminary expenses connected with the surveying, staking out, valuing, letting, and loss, if any, on tenant-right, such expenses being written off over a period of years. In fixing the rent the end in view was to make the estate self-supporting as a small-holdings farm, without consideration of profit on the one hand, or of recourse to philanthropy on the other.'\*

## APPORTIONMENT OF TENANT-RIGHT.

'The apportionment of a tenant-right exceeding £2,200 in amount looks a formidable task until one comes to close quarters. In choosing and placing a tenant the tenant-right was kept in view, and all the tenants of the principal holdings agreed in writing, before entry, to take a fair portion of the roots, straw, manure, etc., as valued, in accordance with the acreage hired and the proper course of cultivation for the year 1907. The manure was thrown up in thirty-two heaps. At the time of writing thirty-one heaps have been disposed of to incoming tenants, and the manure is, for the most part,

\* J. H. Diggle, *Journal of the Land Agents' Society*, January, 1907.

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spread on the land or ploughed in. Several stacks of straw or of winter forage were divided into two or three equal parts; the mangels were all disposed of at valuation price, 90 per cent. of the roots being taken by the tenants; the green-keeping was sold by Mr. Rose to a neighbouring farmer, and is being eaten off by sheep, the incoming tenants agreeing to pay the value of the folding. A survey was made of the land for the purpose of apportioning the tenant-right; and now the land is allotted, it is possible to work out the acreage each incoming tenant has of stubble, seeds, folding, and fallows carrying cultivation, and in due course an account of his apportioned tenant-right will be rendered to each tenant.\*

### DEALING WITH DIFFICULTIES.

As the men only came into possession at Michaelmas, 1906, and much of the building and fencing is not yet completed in a way to enable them to accommodate a full head of stock, it is too soon to offer any opinions on results.

The scheme has, however, already been the means of showing what difficulties are likely to occur in undertakings of this kind, and how they can be dealt with. It has been shown how the apportionment of the tenant-right has been carried out satisfactorily to all concerned.

\* J. H. Diggle, *Journal of the Land Agents' Society*, January, 1907.



## DISPLACEMENT OF WORKMEN.

A more serious difficulty with which Mr. Rose was confronted was the necessary displacement of the workmen originally employed on the farm, who numbered thirty-eight, and many of whom were tenants of the cottages. The men themselves became very apprehensive about their position, in spite of the fact that they were all given an opportunity to take one of the holdings; they sent the following letter to the President of the Board of Agriculture and to the Commissioner of Woods and Forests, as well as to Mr. Rose himself:

‘We, as the undivided workmen of the Crown Farms, Burwell, are very much upset at the thought of the letting of the farms for small holdings, which will mean putting about forty regular hands out of a regular employment, besides a set of odd fellows in busy seasons (which is about another twenty-five), such as harvest-time and other busy times; and we, as workmen, hope that we shall get a plan of helping the greater number, instead of the fewer, and it is hoped the workmen will be first considered that lived and worked on the farms very near all their lifetime. If these small holdings come to pass, it will mean turning fourteen to eighteen families out of house and home, and between thirty and forty children, to let a lot of strangers come in and take the land as small holders and work it themselves and employ no labour, and that will mean we, as labourers, will have to turn out of

regular work and let strangers come in. But we, as workmen, hope that it will be stopped before it gets too late, so that we may keep in our own village to work the same as we have done for years that have gone by.'

Considerable capital was made out of this letter by those who viewed the scheme with distrust, and who were averse to the small-holding system; but how groundless these objections proved is shown by the report, which was a result of careful inquiry, that within ten days of their dismissal every man had been offered work or was in work. Mr. Diggle, moreover, states that one Burwell labourer told him that three small holders had called upon him in one day to solicit his services, and goes on to say: 'As a matter of fact, at the time of writing some of the occupiers of the larger holdings are wanting labourers badly. Again, the expenditure of about £1,000 on repairs and £1,500 on new work necessitated by the change, together with the erection of about one mile of post-and-wire fencing, has created employment, and given no little satisfaction to artisans in Burwell and district.'

But Mr. Rose did not leave the matter to chance. He evolved a scheme of compensation for all the regular workmen on the farm, based on the length of service and the amount of wages. The sum paid out in this way amounted to £389. In addition to his wages, which in the case of the older men were for six months, anyone displaced from a cottage was allowed an extra £2 10s.

## THE CHANCES OF SUCCESS.

The result of this scheme will be watched with interest, and will no doubt afford valuable lessons. Amongst such a large number of men there are bound to be some failures ; but the tenants have been very carefully selected, and are on their mettle. The fact that applications were received for 1,500 acres shows that a healthy demand existed, and allowed a good margin for the sifting out of the less desirable applicants.

The experiment is a bold one, as anyone would realize who contemplated for the first time a 400-acre field which forms part of the land, and the huge barns erected for farming on a large scale. But the following points seem favourable to success :

1. The amount of adaptable buildings situated at different points on the land.

2. The long, straggling nature of the village, which extends over a mile, bringing various parts of the land near to the men's homes.

3. The extent of high-road bordering the land, which reduces the cost of road-making.

4. The existence of several special occupations affording job work to the men holding insufficient land for a living ; also the number of village tradesmen and artisans for whom the land is not too inconveniently situated.

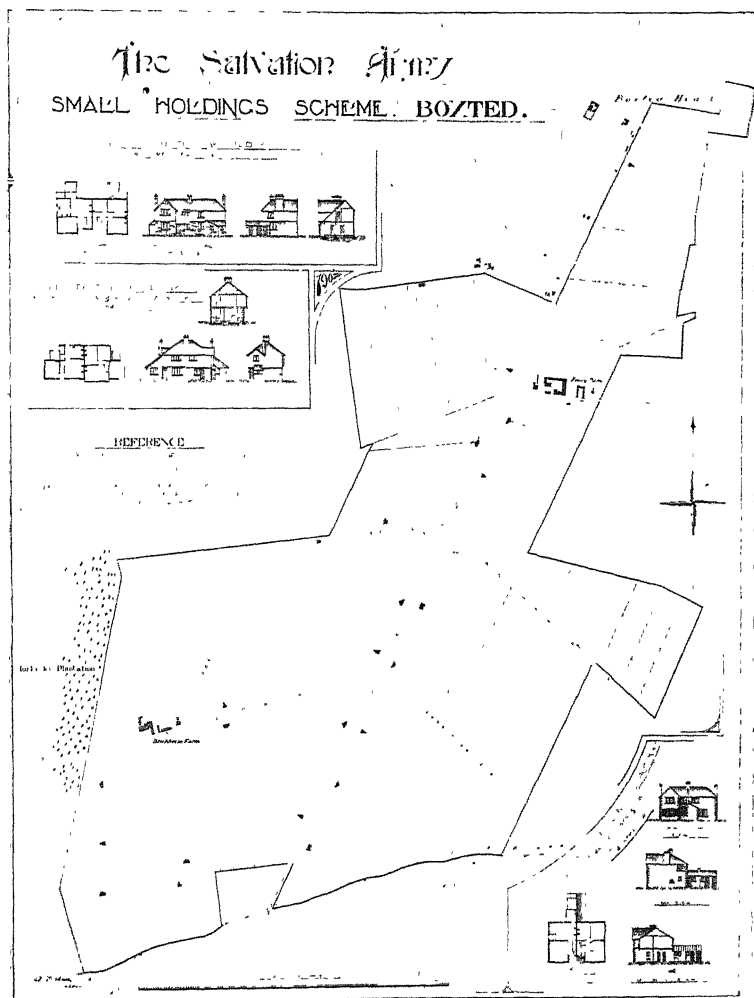
5. The fact that there already existed in the district a certain number of small holders forming a nucleus of men who understand the best methods

of working this particular soil, which in strange hands could easily be farmed in a disastrous way.

It has obviously been an undertaking which has required delicate handling to adjust matters fairly and satisfactorily amongst so many men all clamouring for their own particular requirements. Mr. J. H. Diggle, the steward of the Lincolnshire Small Holdings Association at Spalding, has been entrusted by Mr. Rose with the entire carrying out of the details of the scheme, and anyone studying the present situation on the Burwell Crown lands cannot fail to be struck with the amount of tact, discretion, and knowledge which he must have displayed to carry the whole thing through in the manner in which it has been done. I would therefore add Mr. Diggle's services as a sixth factor conducive to a likelihood of success.

#### THE SALVATION ARMY'S SCHEME FOR SMALL HOLDINGS AT BOXTED, ESSEX.

The late Mr. George Herring entrusted the Salvation Army with £100,000 for the purpose of establishing men on the land, and in October, 1906, they acquired an estate in Essex by way of a beginning. The Army, as a body, seem to be particularly adapted for undertaking any scheme of this sort. They have a very wide organization all over the country, enabling them in an inexpensive and unobtrusive manner to get into touch with all the local conditions, and get hold of information both as to land and to men in a manner which



THE SALVATION ARMY SMALL HOLDINGS SCHEME, BOXTED.



would be almost impossible for a public body. They possess, moreover, an intimate knowledge of the class of men whom it is intended to help, which gives them unrivalled opportunities for selecting the right person—a factor which lies at the root of any success in such settlements. Further, they have men amongst their number of officials who are a nearer approach to experts on an undertaking of this character than are to be found elsewhere. And, finally, the experience they have gained at their labour colony at Hadleigh is a valuable asset, inasmuch as it has acquainted them with the difficulties likely to attend a form of scheme which, although quite a separate problem, offers many identical obstacles.

It is, therefore, with considerable interest that the experiment now being conducted by the Army at Boxted will be watched, and its results will certainly help towards a knowledge of what possibilities lie in the direction of colonization on these lines.

#### THE BOXTED ESTATE.

Boxted is a small village four miles from Colchester. The estate acquired by the Army lies on each side the high-road for one and a half miles, and being also intersected by two cross-roads, it is well adapted for cutting up. It contains 400 acres, and includes two farm-houses with buildings and four cottages. A brook bounds the land at one end, and another runs through it higher up. Water

is found at a depth of 10 or 12 feet all over the estate. The two items, therefore, of water-supply and road-making, which would often involve an outlay nearly equal to the purchase price per acre, are here very favourable.

#### TYPE OF CULTIVATION.

As regards the suitability of the district for cultivation in small holdings, one factor is that this neighbourhood is specially noted for roses, many of the noted rose-growers having their nurseries on the adjoining land ; otherwise the district is purely agricultural, and large farms predominate. Near the village of Boxted there are, however, a certain number of men who cultivate small plots of land in connection with other employments, their produce being bought up by dealers for Colchester and other markets.

The class of land is not ill-adapted for spade cultivation. It is for the most part a sandy loam with gravel 10 to 12 feet down. Stronger land would no doubt require less manure, but would take much more labour in cultivation, and could not be worked in all weathers, which is a point to be specially considered by the small man who relies on his own labour entirely.

As regards disposal of produce, Colchester is within reasonable reach of the chief seaside resorts of the East Coast, with their very large summer demand for all market-garden produce. Clacton-on-Sea is only



sixteen miles away, and is said to increase its population by 20,000 every summer.

#### DIVISION OF THE LAND.

The land has been divided up into eighty plots of from  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 6 acres ; by far the larger number average 5 acres apiece. Advantage has been taken of existing fences for boundary-lines ; and as the cultivation is to be on market-gardening lines, there is no need for the erection of fences, the land being merely staked out. It has also only been found necessary to make two short accommodation roads.

It is intended to put up a house on each plot, and make each holding self-contained.

The land is being cultivated and got into condition for planting. Three-quarters of an acre on each holding will be planted with mixed fruit-trees and bushes, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre with strawberries. Manures and seeds will be provided to start with, also sufficient capital to help the holders over the first year.

In calculating the price of a holding, all these items will be included in capital expenditure along with the cost of the land, buildings, road-making, and other expenses of adaptation.

#### CONDITIONS OF TENURE.

For the first three years the holders will be tenants at will. If at the end of that time they have proved themselves capable and industrious,

they will be granted a lease of 999 years on the following terms: 6 per cent. will be charged on the total cost of each holding as described above; the sum of capital and interest combined will be paid off in thirty-three years; so that at the end of the first three years, if the lease is granted, the leaseholders will have thirty years of an annual payment calculated in this way. At the end of that time they will only have to pay a quit-rent of 1s. an acre or so, and become practically freeholders. The leasehold rights can be sold or transferred without any restrictions, subject, however, to the Army's approval of the new tenant.

The cost of a 5-acre holding works out at about £450 to £500. At 6 per cent. this involves an annual payment of £27 10s. per annum.

At first sight this seems a high figure, but it must be remembered that it includes the cost of the fruit-planting, from which the tenants derive considerable benefit from the first year onwards. It also includes the cost of all initial expenses, such as seeds, manures, and preliminary cultivation, and one year's maintenance.

The tithe and land tax have been redeemed, the sum involved to do this being added to the initial cost of the land.

The tenant pays rates. Outside repairs to buildings will be at the expense of the lessors, but inside repairs and maintenance at the cost of tenants.

## CULTIVATION OF THE HOLDINGS.

It is intended that the holdings shall be cultivated entirely by spade labour, and that a system of market-gardening shall be adopted on the 4 acres which are not planted with fruit. The holders will also be encouraged to keep pigs and poultry. The cost of planting 1 acre of fruit is, roughly, about £25. It takes about 200 apples, plums and pears, 600 to 900 bushes of currants, gooseberries and raspberries, and about 2,000 strawberry plants. The varieties of fruit are being chosen with the view of getting a range of early to late produce. This involves about a dozen different sorts of apples, and two or three kinds of plums, such as the Victoria and the Rivers Heron, a middle variety.

There will be an expert adviser to supply information as to the best methods of cultivation and the most suitable crops for production.

One of the new settlers will be a successful Evesham grower who has reported favourably on the suitability of the place for the intensive cultivation practised at Evesham, and it is expected that his experience will be valuable in giving a lead to others.

The distribution of the produce will be made an object of special attention. A society of the growers will be formed, and the produce will be collected, graded, and distributed as a whole. The Army are already in the position of distributing

## 432 PRESENT-DAY EXPERIMENTS

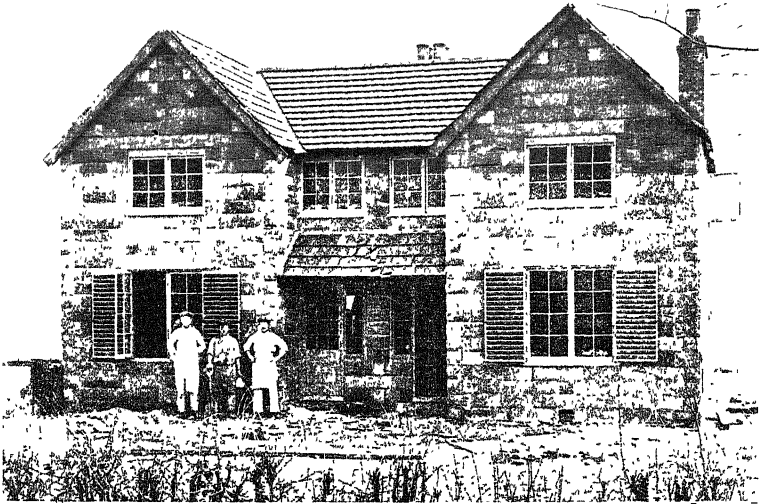
agents for market-garden produce, and are in touch with centres where they have every hope of an adequate disposal of properly collected and graded produce.

### HOUSING.

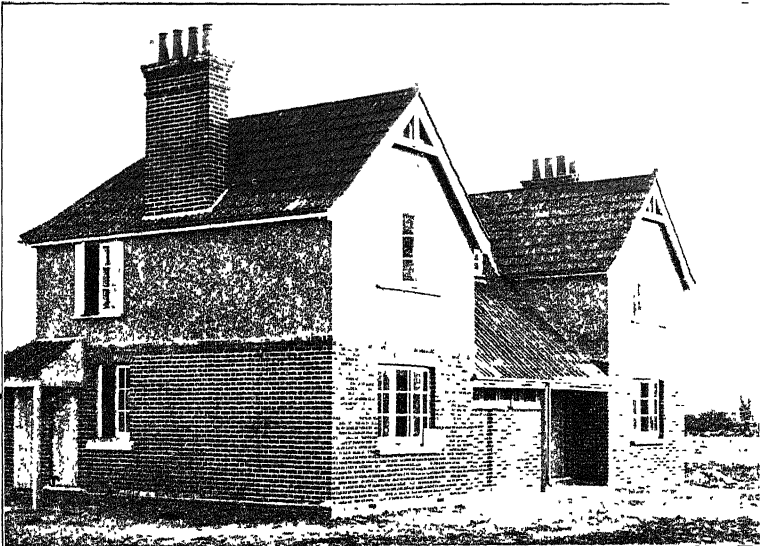
One of the farm-houses will be occupied by the overseer, and the farm buildings will be turned into a central grading store for the whole colony. The other house will be divided to accommodate two families; out of the four cottages, three will be used for separate holdings; the fourth, being in bad repair, will probably be pulled down.

There are forty-four cottages being erected at the present time. They are all put up in pairs, and consist of a good kitchen and parlour, back-kitchen, pantry, coal-house, and three bedrooms. The back-kitchen contains a bath and boiler, and in some cases a small cooking apparatus. Every cottage has also an outbuilding for tools, etc. The roof-water is collected in an underground cement tank, which serves for the two houses; every house has its own well and cesspool. The roofs are all of red tiles. There are three types of houses being put up by three separate firms, all with the accommodation mentioned above, but varying in finish and material according to the price. The cheapest are built of concrete blocks, and cost £330 a pair. The sand and gravel for the concrete can be obtained locally, although not actually on the estate.

I.



II.



HOUSES ON THE SALVATION ARMY COLONY AT BOXTED.

I. Built of concrete blocks at £330 the pair.

II. Built of brick at £360 the pair.

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The other two types of houses are of brick, and cost £360 and £375 a pair. The cost of construction of the wells and cesspools brings the total figure in each case up to about an additional £25.

The houses are well built, and the details carefully thought out. It will be seen from the illustrations that they are also of pleasing appearance.

#### CHARACTER OF TENANTS.

It is hoped that thirty families will be settled on the land in October; five are already established, and a sixth is coming immediately. The tenants are being very carefully selected out of the large number of applications which have been received from all parts. About forty local people have applied; this fact alone augurs well for the success of the scheme. There is no shrewder judge of what is going to be a benefit to him in the long run than the average local working man, arising partly from his knowledge of what return the particular land he knows is likely to give him for his labour. It has already been pointed out in previous chapters how, in all the undertakings we have considered for establishing colonies, the local man has always steadily kept out of them in the first instance. The fact that so many of these men have applied in this case shows the confidence which exists amongst them as to the possibilities in connection with its development. A few of the prospective tenants have a very little capital of from £50 to £100, but at least 80 per cent. have none at all.

They are all agriculturists, or connected in some way with the land ; 40 per cent., however, though country-bred, are coming back from town life. About one-third are Salvationists.

#### THE LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS.

If there is any criticism to offer, it is merely to suggest that it *will* take picked men, both from the point of view of knowledge and industry, to cultivate 5 acres single-handed by spade labour. There is no doubt that on this class of soil it can be done, especially when, as in this case, no time will be lost in seeing to the marketing of produce, and it will be possible for the small holder to turn his whole attention to production. There is a possibility, however, that the average man will find this amount of land quite as much as he can manage, and it will be interesting to note what percentage of the men find this to be the most suitable size, and what exact type of cultivation they will find the most profitable.

A study of all the schemes which have been considered in this volume seems to point to the fact that, as far as we have gone in the question, small holdings to be successful must occur as a natural growth, and be evolved out of local conditions. Here the undertaking is more on the lines of an artificial experiment. A new method of cultivation on new lines is being introduced into a purely agricultural district. But it must also be remembered that all previous schemes have been



initiated either by enthusiasts with no adequate knowledge or purely as commercial transactions, where the interests of the cultivator were not studied. The Salvation Army cannot be put in either category: the undertaking has been well and wisely considered by competent and practical men; the land has been acquired at a reasonable figure, and the subsequent expenses in adaptation have been at a minimum; the men are being put on under every possible condition conducive to success. Before entirely condemning artificial experiments of the colony type, it would therefore be well to wait for the lessons that this undertaking will have to teach us. If it should prove that this particular way of dealing with the small-holdings question is a sound one, the Army will have done a great work.

‘LAND FOR THE PEOPLE, LIMITED.’

I am glad, however, to learn that the Army does not intend to confine its endeavours in the establishment of people on the land to the formation of experimental colonies. They have decided to use the splendid opportunities which arise from their vast organization to further a wider extension of a small-holdings system on what seems more natural lines. They have recently registered a company with nominal capital under the title of the ‘Land for the People, Limited.’ Its main object will be to seek for land where the demand for it amongst local men exists, and acquire estates to relet accord-

ing to local requirements, and only to such an extent in each place as will satisfy the purely local demand amongst men who already have the knowledge necessary for its successful cultivation. Their idea at present is to take such land on lease where this is possible, and only purchase it in those cases where there is no alternative.

### GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.

It was stated at the outset of this volume that its aim was merely to present existing facts, and not to enter into arguments on the points, both of principle and detail, about which such divers opinions are held.

The author has endeavoured to keep strictly within these bounds, and has merely indicated in a general way at the end of each chapter what light the particular facts contained in it seem to throw on disputed points; and should the reader fail to agree with any of the deductions, the bare facts are there on which he can found his own views.

It might be as well, before closing, to recall briefly what are the main points which these researches seem to emphasize.

First of all, we have seen that England already possesses what might be called a definite small-holding system of its own, and that, where the laws of supply and demand are allowed free play in land, there is a distinct tendency to the natural occurrence of small holdings under many and various conditions.

## LESSONS OF VARIOUS SCHEMES 437

Secondly, it is necessary to admit that certain schemes, fostered by idealists and faddists, although valuable as affording distinct lessons, have not been generally successful when viewed from the standpoint of the object of their creation ; but that at the same time their failure can in no way be regarded as an argument for the failure of small holdings.

Again, in the case of commercial land companies, we see how the land is mostly taken up by town men with some capital, many with no knowledge of cultivation ; and while there will be found a sprinkling of successful men amongst these, the agriculturist proper, with local knowledge, fights shy of acquiring land in this way.

But to turn to the other side of the picture. Where such schemes have been carried out with local knowledge and real understanding by individual enterprise, whether through private transactions, or the formation of Small Holdings Associations, or by the action of landowners on their estates, the success is very marked : depopulation is stayed, poor relief diminishes, public-houses disappear, and a closer settlement on the land is accomplished at no cost to anyone.

We see, moreover, how, in connection with Industrial Co-operative Associations in the neighbourhood of small manufacturing towns or industrial centres, a successful system of small holdings has arisen through the endeavours of the men themselves, and with no assistance from outside sources.

But no universal extension of the system can be expected without legislative assistance, and the chief value of the above schemes, whether as failures or successes, lies in the indication they afford of the lines on which this legislative action should be based.

It has been pointed out that the failure of the Small Holdings Act has been largely due to the methods of its administration, and those who assert that this failure points to the want of desire for land amongst the rural population, or the impossibility of establishing holdings on an economic basis, are making such statements without the adequate knowledge of existing facts on a comprehensive scale, which alone would make any opinion reliable.

At the same time the writer is very well aware of the aspect of this question, which is the only one known to a certain proportion of those who have to deal, chiefly as landowners or agents, at first hand with the details of our land system. She is fully acquainted with those facts which are called up as evidence of the uneconomic position of the small holding in this country : the hand-to-mouth existence of the last surviving stragglers of a once successful race of small freeholders ; the bad methods of cultivation, the wretched stock, and the hard life of those who stick to traditional methods under unfavourable conditions ; the habit of subsidizing small holdings on many estates by keeping them in repair on the basis of uneconomic rents ;

also the absence of any demand for land amongst the labouring population in those districts where generations of farming on a large scale have destroyed the small-holding instinct.

It will not help the question to shut one's eyes to these facts, as real as the facts of success mentioned in the foregoing pages. It is easy to understand how galling the rhetorical denunciations of many reformers and journalists are to the man who, in his own way, has lived more in touch with the conditions they denounce, and is aware of the many fallacies they make and the pitfalls into which they are likely to fall in any effort at reform. But why, one is tempted to ask, does he not set to and use his superior knowledge to tackle this question himself?

For it is maintained that these facts are not sufficient in themselves to justify a wholesale condemnation of the small-holding system, especially when, as is too often the case, such condemnations are based entirely on the knowledge gleaned in one particular environment. If the causes of failures are thoroughly looked into, how often will it not be found that this condemnation should be directed against the individualistic, antiquated methods of cultivation and marketing of the holders themselves rather than against the actual existence of such holders? These men serve a purpose other than that of mere agricultural success in the economy of nations. We should therefore direct our efforts rather to the solving of this problem

of organized production and disposal of produce than to the denouncing of a system whose success is already proved under so many divers conditions in so many areas of the United Kingdom.

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